



Salmon Recovery Funding Board Meeting Agenda

June 3-4, 2025

Hybrid

Location In-Person:

Tour Day (June 3): King County- See agenda below for approximate location sites.

Tour Google Map Directions: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/UWMVLh4BAiJmTgrX8>

Meeting Day (June 4): Room 172, First Floor, Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street, SE, Olympia, WA. This public meeting location allows the public to provide comment and listen to the meeting as required by the Open Public Meeting Act. This requirement can be waived via [HB 1329](#) if there is declaration of emergency or if an agency determines that a public meeting cannot safely be held. If an emergency occurs, remote technology will be used instead.

Location Virtually (June 4 Only):

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_HGNt3f0eQ9CDWoHjXXE0mQ

Phone Option: (669) 900-6833 – **Webinar ID:** 875 1511 8718

**Additionally, the Recreation and Conservation Office will record this meeting and would be happy to assist you after the meeting to access the recording.*

Order of Presentation: In general, each agenda item will include a staff presentation, followed by board discussion. The board only makes decisions following the public comment portion of the agenda decision item.

Public Comment: General public comment is encouraged to be submitted in advance to the meeting in written form. Public comment on agenda items is also permitted. If you wish to comment, you may e-mail your request or written comments to Julia.McNamara@rco.wa.gov. Comment for these items will be limited to three minutes per person.

COVID Precautions: Masks and hand sanitizer will be made available. If you are feeling ill, the Zoom webinar format is a reliable resource for home viewing.

Open Meeting Agreement: This open public meeting is webcast on Television Washington and recorded. By attending this meeting, you agree that your image, anything you say, and any materials you submit may be posted indefinitely on Recreation and Conservation Office's and Television Washington's websites.

Special Accommodations: People with disabilities needing an accommodation to participate in RCO public meetings are invited to contact Leslie Frank by phone (360) 902-0220 or e-mail Leslie.Frank@rco.wa.gov.

Tuesday, June 3, 2025 (Tour)

Tour Agenda

8:30 a.m.	Call to Order at DoubleTree Hotel (415 Capitol Way Olympia, WA 98501) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roll Call and Determination of Quorum• Review and Approval of Agenda (Decision)• Remarks by the Chair• Travel to Project 22-119 (70 min)	<i>Chair Breckel</i>
10:00 a.m.	1. Cedar River Upper Royal Arch Habitat Enhancement; 22-1191 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visit site (60 min)• Travel to project 21-1002 (30 min)	<i>Seattle Public Utilities</i>
11:30 a.m.	2. Flaming Geyser State Park Riparian Revegetation Project 21-1002; 22-1044 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eat Lunch (30 min)• Visit site (60 min)• Travel through Whitney Bridge Park (10 min)• Travel to project 20-1102 (30 min)	<i>King County Water and Land Resources</i>
1:40 p.m.	3. White River LB RM 2.5-4.2/ White River Acquisition and Setback Levee Project 20-1102; 07-1910 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spend 60 min at the site• Travel back to Olympia (60 min)	<i>City of Sumner King County Dept. of Natural Resources and Parks</i>
3:45 p.m.	4. DoubleTree Hotel: Recess Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Travel	

Wednesday, June 4, 2025 (Meeting Day at Natural Resources Building)

OPENING AND MANAGEMENT REPORTS

9:00 a.m.	Call to Order	<i>Chair Breckel</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll Call and Determination of Quorum • Approval of March Meeting Minutes (Decision) • Remarks by the Chair 	

9:05 a.m.	5. Tour Debrief	<i>Kat Moore</i>
-----------	------------------------	------------------

9:35 a.m.	6. Director's Report	
	A. Director's Report	<i>Megan Duffy</i>
	B. Legislative and Policy Update	<i>Brock Milliern</i>
	C. Fiscal Update (written only)	<i>Mark Jarasitis</i>
	D. Performance Report (written only)	<i>Bart Lynch</i>

10:05 a.m.	7. Salmon Recovery Management Report	
	A. Salmon Management Report	<i>Kat Moore</i>
	B. Governor's Salmon Recovery Office Report	<i>Erik Neatherlin</i>
		<i>Tara Galuska</i>
		<i>Katie Knight-Pruit</i>

10:20 a.m.	General Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda:	
	<i>Please limit comments to three minutes.</i>	

10:25 a.m.	Break	
------------	--------------	--

10:50 a.m.	8. Partner Reports	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Regions • Washington Salmon Coalition • Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups 	<i>Amanda Ward</i> <i>Renee Johnson</i> <i>Jason Lundgren</i>

BOARD BUSINESS: BRIEFING

11:20 a.m.	9. Skagit River Intensively Monitored Watershed	<i>Correigh Green</i> <i>Mike Lemoine</i>
------------	--	--

11:50 a.m.	Lunch	
------------	--------------	--

BOARD BUSINESS: DECISION

12:50 p.m.	10. Intensively Monitored Watershed Program: The Path Forward	<i>Greer Maier</i>
------------	--	--------------------

BOARD BUSINESS: BRIEFING

1:50 p.m.	11. Acquisition Policy Changes	<i>Nick Norton</i>
-----------	---------------------------------------	--------------------

BOARD BUSINESS: REQUEST FOR DIRECTION

2:10 p.m.	12.Future Riparian Approaches	<i>Nick Norton</i>
------------------	--------------------------------------	--------------------

3:10 p.m.	Break
------------------	--------------

BOARD BUSINESS: DECISION

3:25 p.m.	13.Funding Allocation for Board Programs	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2025 Grant Round• Cost Increases• Review Panel Funding• Regional Organization Capacity Funding• Lead Entity Capacity Funding• Monitoring Contracts	<i>Kat Moore</i> <i>Jeannie Abbott</i> <i>Greer Maier</i>

BOARD BUSINESS: BRIEFING

4:25 p.m.	14.Partner Reports	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conservation Commission• Department of Ecology• Department of Natural Resources• Department of Fish and Wildlife• Department of Transportation	<i>Levi Keesecker</i> <i>Annette Hoffmann</i> <i>Tom Gorman</i> <i>Jeremy Cram</i> <i>Susan Kanzler</i>

4:25 p.m.	Adjourn
------------------	----------------

Next Meeting: September 16-17, 2025, Virtual and/or In person in Room 172, Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street, SE, Olympia, WA, 98501

SALMON RECOVERY FUNDING BOARD SUMMARY MINUTES

Date: March 11, 2025

Place: Hybrid – Room 172, Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, Washington 98501 and online via Zoom

Salmon Recovery Funding Board Members:

Jeff Breckel, Chair	Stevenson	Annette Hoffmann	Designee, Washington Department of Ecology
Kaleen Cottingham	Olympia	Tom Gorman	Designee, Department of Natural Resources
Chris Endresen-Scott	Conconully	Levi Keesecker	Designee, Washington State Conservation Commission
Joe Maroney	Spokane	Jeremy Cram	Designee, Department of Fish and Wildlife
Kadi Bizyayeva	Stanwood	Susan Kanzler	Designee, Washington Department of Transportation

This summary is to be used with the materials provided in advance of the meeting. The Recreation and Conservation Office retains a recording as the formal record of the meeting.

Call to Order:

Chair Jeff Breckel called the Salmon Recovery Funding Board meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. **Julia McNamara**, Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) board liaison, performed roll call and determined quorum. **Member Kadi Bizyayeva** was absent.

Chair Breckel noted an amendment to the agenda: Item 7: Mid-Columbia Regional Presentation should be removed from the agenda as Alex Conley is unable to present.

Motion: Move to remove Item 7 from the agenda and approve the agenda.

Moved by: Member **Maroney**

Seconded by: Member **Cottingham**

Approved: **Approved**

Motion: Move to approve the amended **March 11, 2025**, agenda.

Moved by: Member **Endresen-Scott**

Seconded by: Member **Cottingham**

Approved: **Approved**

Motion: Move to approve the **December 2024** Meeting Minutes.
Moved by: Member **Cottingham**
Seconded by: Member **Endresen-Scott**
Approved: **Approved**

Member Cottingham noted minor stylistic suggestions in the minutes had been made to Director Megan Duffy.

Item 1: Director's Report

Director Megan Duffy noted that RCO submitted the 2025 Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund application. There was a continuing resolution in front of the U.S. House in which the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund appeared to be untouched. Additionally, existing funding from the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund has been available.

Governor Ferguson's proposed budget reduction ideas include the possibility of state employee furloughs eight hours per month for the biennium. The Office of Financial Management accepted RCO's 6 percent budget reduction package, which included the currently vacant Governor Salmon Recovery Office policy specialist position; Eli Asher left RCO in January and his position will not be filled. Other budget reductions came from the regions, which will be around \$20,000 over the biennium. Staff will work with regions to determine what this will look like for them.

Additional staff changes include the retirement of Myra Barker, compliance unit manager; Sarah Johnson-Humphries, cultural resources unit manager, leaving RCO for a position at the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Leslie Frank retiring at the end of May. Lastly, Deputy Director Scott Robinson is in the final steps of filling the salmon section manager position.

Policy and Legislative Update

Brock Milliern, policy and legislative director, shared that the next revenue forecast is expected on March 18, noting budgets are often released shortly after the revenue forecast release. The House budget release is expected the week of March 24. Mr. Milliern will share budget information shortly after it is available. Special session occurrence will depend on whether bills are required to implement the budget.

Mr. Milliern shared pertinent bill information. [House Bill 1923](#) establishes a walk-on ferry system and staff are working to ensure orca protection is included in the bill, consistent with Washington State ferries. [Senate Bill 5157](#) allows for direct sale of wood from the Department of Natural Resources for habitat restoration projects. [Senate Bill 5303](#)

extends the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan water storage requirements from 2025 to 2035. [Senate Bill 2003](#) establishes a Columbia River salmon and steelhead fishing endorsement.

Member Cottingham asked if any of the bills from the Ruckelshaus process for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife made it through cutoff. Mr. Milliern answered no.

Chair Breckel noted the complexity of salmon recovery funding coming in part from Climate Commitment Act and some from state capital. Mr. Milliern noted the Climate Commitment Act funding contributed to the capital budget uncertainty, noting that bond funds appear to be okay.

Item 2: Salmon Recovery Management Report

Erik Neatherlin, Governor's Salmon Recovery Office director, noted that the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office is writing an agency request letter for federal requests and support letters for the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund including the Five State Letter and letters to the Washington State House and Senate. Congressional offices have opened portals for requests for Federal Fiscal Year 2026.

The Five State Delegation, consisting of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California, and Alaska, was scheduled to travel to Washington D.C. in March; however, the delegation postponed the trip, likely until fall. The delegation will meet quarterly to continue coordinating.

Mr. Neatherlin thanked Jeannie Abbott, program coordinator, for completing the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund application, noting this year the program is more competitive than ever.

The Governor's Salmon Recovery Office has presented at the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee; met with community groups and partners; and co-hosted knowledge exchange workshops on large wood applications and river restoration with Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Pacific Salmon Foundation. Staff continue meeting quarterly with tribal organizations and regional recovery organizations.

Mr. Neatherlin highlighted the monitoring grant program, which has received many letters of intent, indicating robust interest.

Chair Breckel asked when the preliminary award for the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund is expected. Mr. Neatherlin answered it is still uncertain. **Director Duffy**

had heard from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that the process may be slower this year due to staffing cuts.

Tara Galuska, orca recovery coordinator, highlighted the [1,000-yard distance law](#) that went into place on January 1. Around January first, two Southern Resident Killer Whale calves were born, one is doing well, while the other died. There was a well-attended [Be Whale Wise](#) booth at the Seattle Boat Show, and the 1,000-yard distance was well received. An RCO social media post about the 1,000-yard distance was extremely popular and received many comments that will be addressed in future posts. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is discussing creating an ambassador program for boaters to become trained and knowledgeable about whales and laws to share information with fellow boaters.

Ms. Galuska recently monitored a transboundary panel with Canada on vessels and learned about the similarities between Washington and Canada regarding whales; for example Canada has [Straitwatch](#) and the [Marine Mammal Desk](#), while Washington has [Soundwatch](#) and the [Cetacean Desk](#). Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans proposed an emergency order to declare Southern Resident Killer Whales to be in imminent threat, but Canada chose not to declare the threat in early March.

Ms. Galuska noted there were many National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration staff impacted by the recent federal layoffs, including the staff person in charge of monitoring whales during an oil spill response. Ms. Galuska works with an intergovernmental work group with several federal and state entities that meet quarterly. The work group is working on a collaboration of priorities, which Ms. Galuska can share at the next meeting.

Lastly, [Billy Frank Jr. Day](#) will be celebrated March 19 at Timberline High School in Lacey, hosted by the North Thurston School District and the Nisqually Tribe.

Chair Breckel asked about British Columbia's reluctance to finalize the declaration of threat to Southern Resident Killer Whale's. Ms. Galuska noted the decision must be made at their federal level and the Canadian government is undergoing many transitions. Additionally, if the threat was in place, then it could require funding.

Kat Moore, assistant salmon section manager, announced the retirement of outdoor grants manager, Sandy Dotts, on April 1. Theresa Miskovic will take over the Family Forest Fish Passage Program and John Foltz will take over Pend Orielle lead entity work.

RCO was the recipient of significant Climate Commitment Act funding beginning January 1, and staff are working hard to get projects under agreement. Additionally, the

2025 grant round started at the end of February with site visits. Staff split the lead entities into two groups, Track One and Track Two, and are currently in the middle of Track One. This year's review panel will meet virtually for cost savings. After this meeting, sponsors can take the review panel's feedback and update their applications to resubmit in June. Track Two will begin at the end of April. Sponsors are submitting projects for the riparian program and regular board funding. There are no Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration projects being solicited this year. Sponsors have submitted significant project requests. Ms. Moore will provide an update on the numbers of projects and types of requests at the June meeting.

This year's board tour will be in the mid-Puget Sound area and coordination with lead entities and the Puget Sound Partnership has begun.

Chair Breckel asked about virtual site visits as discussed by the review panel last year. Ms. Moore noted that all site visits have been in person so far, except the Lower Columbia lead entity who may do a mix of in person and virtual. It is up to the lead entities in cooperation with grant managers to visit sites that have not previously been visited. This is left up to the lead entities who have a better understanding of the project sites.

Director Duffy noted **Member Maroney** had suggested a board tour to the Upper Columbia area; however, given the Governor's directive and to save money, the board tour will be local this year. **Member Maroney** understood and hoped for a future travel meeting to the east side of the state.

General Public Comment

None.

Item 3: Partner Reports

Council of Regions

Alex Conley, Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board executive director and member of the Council of Regions, noted Amanda Ward and David Dicks have been co-chairs of the Council of Regions since January. The Council of Regions has dealt with the uncertainty of the federal funding directive, which has increased the council's work to shift funding between projects. The council is working on creative solutions to keep the highest priority projects moving.

Mr. Conley noted the memo for Item 6: Possible Riparian Funding Options captures the regional support for Option 2 and the amendments that allow for flexibility. The Council

of Regions also strongly agrees to use a percentage-based approach for the Spokane Lead Entity in Item 5.

The new monitoring program has had a good response, with ten applications in progress from six of the seven regions, requesting three times the total available funding, indicating a strong need.

Washington Salmon Coalition

Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council executive director and Washington Salmon Coalition chair, noted the Washington Salmon Coalition convened on February 5 for Salmon Day, along with the Council of Regions and the Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group, and met with ninety-four legislators. All Washington Salmon Coalition Members agreed to keep the Salmon Day tradition going.

Cheryl Bauman from the North Olympic Peninsula Lead Entity, who provides lead entity reports each meeting, is passing the task to Danni Driscoll from the Stillaguamish Lead Entity. This work is important to give the story of what lead entities are doing on the ground to support salmon recovery.

Following Salmon Day, the Washington Salmon Coalition held their quarterly meeting where Megan Corbiere was welcomed to the Skagit Watershed Council as a lead entity coordinator; Greer Maier presented the Fish Passage survey report and received feedback on the process and results; and welcomed Cecilia Gobin from the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, Willy Frank III from the Nisqually Tribe, and Glenda Breiler from the Washington Department of Natural Resources who hosted a screening of [Fish Wars](#).

Regarding Item 5: Spokane Lead Entity Project Funding Amount, the Washington Salmon Coalition supports a percentage rather than a fixed amount option, either Option 2a or Option 2b, with no specific percentage recommendation.

On Item 6: Possible Riparian Funding Options, the coalition supports Option 2, allowing funding to roll over.

Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group

Morgan Morris, Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group executive director, noted Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups are navigating federal and state budget uncertainties. Funding cuts are a serious concern to essential salmon recovery work. The [Regional Fisheries Coalition 2024 Annual Report](#) is available online and highlights projects from each regional fisheries enhancement group. The second annual Salmon

Day was important for connecting communities to salmon recovery efforts in a meaningful way.

Looking ahead, the Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups continue to monitor the budget situation and advocate for increased funding where possible. Additionally, the groups are working to secure a legislative sponsor for a proviso that would protect the Salmon Schools funding.

Chair Breckel commended the partners on their work on Salmon Day and communicating with legislators on the importance of salmon recovery. **Aundrea McBride** noted the committee is already planning the next Salmon Day.

BREAK 10:04 A.M. – 10:23 A.M.

Item 4: Intensively Monitored Watershed Program: The Path Forward

Greer Maier, science coordinator, provided an overview of the annual board funding for each intensively monitored watershed (IMW), noting the IMW program has significant cost-share and the table below does not capture the full cost to implement IMWs.

Intensively Monitored Watershed	Annual Board Funding
Lower Columbia IMW	\$429,113
Hood Canal IMW	\$429,113
Straits IMW	\$441,193
Skagit IMW	\$333,232
Total	\$1,632,651

In June, the board directed staff to further develop two options:

- Option 1 – Full Implementation: Continue to implement the IMW monitoring approach without change through to the end of a defined post-treatment period that captures all major restoration.
- Option 2 – Modified Implementation: Modify fish and/or habitat monitoring based on results to date and remaining data and information needs without significantly compromising the integrity of the IMW.

Further details and IMW goals can be found in the [meeting materials](#).

Option 2 is not being proposed for the Skagit IMW because more restoration is planned, there is broad support from Tribes and partners to continue as planned, and continued funding is needed to maintain the integrity of the study. Partners from Skagit IMW will be available to answer questions at the June board meeting. While developing

Option 2 for the remaining IMWs, staff considered: study geography, study timeline, and fish and habitat monitoring elements. Details on these elements can be found in the meeting materials. Ms. Maier presented what both options would look like for the IMWs, excluding the Skagit IMW.

Lower Columbia IMW

Option 1: Continue fish and habitat monitoring in all three watersheds until 2032. There will be no change in the methodology or approach under this option.

Option 2:

- Fish Monitoring – Continue funding for smolt, juvenile, and adult monitoring until 2032.
- Habitat Monitoring – Complete watershed condition data collection in 2025, analysis timeline to be determined. Complete restoration effectiveness analysis by 2026 with a focus on Abernathy Creek. No further data collection is likely needed.

Hood Canal IMW

Option 1: Continue funding for fish and habitat monitoring in all four watersheds until 2032. There will be no change in methodology or approach under this option.

Option 2:

- Fish Monitoring – Continue smolt, juvenile, and adult monitoring in all four watersheds until 2028.
- Habitat Monitoring – Complete watershed condition monitoring in 2025, analysis by 2026. Complete restoration effectiveness analysis by 2026 with a focus on Big Beef, Litter Anderson, and Seabeck Creeks. No further data collection is likely needed.

Straits IMW

Option 1: Continue funding for fish and habitat monitoring in all three watersheds until 2032. There will be no change in the methodology or approach under this option.

Option 2:

- Fish Monitoring – Continue smolt, juvenile, and adult monitoring until 2028.
- Habitat Monitoring – Complete watershed condition monitoring in 2024, analysis by 2026. Complete restoration effectiveness analysis by 2026 with a focus on Deep and East Twin Creeks. No further data collection is likely needed.

The Science Advisory Panel will meet March 24 to make a recommendation for the Monitoring Subcommittee, who will then develop a recommendation for the full board for a decision in June. Ms. Maier will also have cost estimates to go along with the recommendation in June.

Members Hoffmann and Keesecker liked the way Option 2 was presented in a digestible way that clarified the nuances of the work done in each IMW.

Members discussed what they would like to see in June, which included a cost savings comparison and a schedule for when and how frequently results will be reported.

Member Maroney suggested a “lessons learned” summary from all the IMWs. **Member Hoffmann** requested that the results be presented in an easily digestible way by providing descriptions of the results and how they can be useful to regions, users of funding, and decision making. Ms. Maier noted a “lessons learned” paper is being created as part of a special edition of the journal [*Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*](#). Some of the board members have already been interviewed as part of that effort.

Public Comment

None.

Item 5: Spokane Lead Entity Project Funding Amount

Jeannie Abbott, program coordinator, noted that at the June 2024 meeting, the board directed staff to explore options including identifying a set amount of state portion funds, identifying a percentage of state portion of board funds, and assist the Spokane Tribe with applying to the 2026 Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund grant round. Since June, staff have created options for funding the Spokane Lead Entity.

Assuming there will be \$20 million available in capital funds in the 2025-2027 biennium, \$2,400,000 would be for lead entity capacity. The remaining breaks down to \$640,000 for regional fisheries enhancement groups, \$769,927 for RCO administrative costs, \$8,081,536 in state funds per grant round, and \$16,136,072 for projects. Ms. Abbott noted this is a lower projected amount in state funding than in past biennia.

Ms. Abbott presented options using the assumed funding amount above:

- Option 1a: Spokane Lead Entity receives an established amount of \$300,000.
- Option 1b: Spokane Lead Entity receives an established amount of \$400,000.
- Option 2a: Spokane Lead Entity receives 2 percent, or \$161,630.
- Option 2b: Spokane Lead Entity receives 3 percent, or \$242,246.

Details on these options are included in the [meeting materials](#). Ms. Abbott provided a comparison of lead entities' current allocation, and what the allocation for each lead entity would look at a 2 percent and 3 percent allocation for the Spokane Lead Entity.

Member Cottingham asked if the regional allocation formula would change and if the Spokane Lead Entity would join the Northeast Washington Region where there would be one regional allocation that is divided between the two lead entities. Ms. Abbott answered this does not affect the regional allocation formula because the board requested that the Spokane Lead Entity not go into the allocation formula. The Spokane Lead Entity funds would come from state funds only. The Spokane and Pend Orielle lead entities prefer to remain separate, in part due to the Northeast Washington Region boundary having bull trout, while there are no bull trout in Spokane.

Member Hoffmann wondered if the amounts address the lead entities' needs. Ms. Abbott chose the 2 percent and 3 percent options based on the low end of what lead entities received, noting all lead entities have projects that require more funding than is allocated. **Member Cottingham** asked if this amount would fund the Spokane Lead Entity's projects and Ms. Abbott answered they do not currently have a project list.

Members discussed the options and agreed that a percentage option made sense.

Member Endresen-Scott noted it is easier to increase than decrease a percentage and suggested starting at the lower percentage.

Director Duffy summarized that the Spokane Lead Entity would only use state funds because there are no federally listed species. The Spokane Lead Entity would be an additional line item taken out of the state funds, at the percentage determined by the board, before the existing regional and lead entity allocation.

Motion:	<u>Move to approve that the Spokane Lead Entity receives 2 percent of state funds in each grant round.</u>
Moved by:	Member Endresen-Scott
Seconded by:	Member Cottingham
Approved:	Approved

Member Endresen-Scott noted the percentage could be changed following a grant round.

Public Comment

None.

LUNCH: 11:37 A.M. – 12:45 P.M.

Item 6: Possible Riparian Funding Options

Kat Moore noted the board received \$25 million in the 2023-2025 biennium for a riparian program, with some funds carrying into 2025. In August, the board requested \$25 million in the 2025-2027 biennium, and this amount was included in Governor Inslee's budget; however, there is some uncertainty about the 2025-2027 budget as incoming Governor Ferguson's budget and the house and senate budgets are not yet available. In the meantime, the 2025 grant round is underway.

The options for riparian fund allocation in the 2025-2027 biennium, should funding be appropriated by the legislature, are as follows:

- Option 1: Split regional allocations evenly between 2025 and 2026; require that annual amounts are obligated.
 - Option 1a: If a region does not use their entire 2025 allocation, the board may shift the remaining allocation to another region that has alternates that could be funded.
 - Option 1b: Adjust grant timeline to allow approval by the board in either September and/or December.
- Option 2: Allow and encourage regions to use their entire biennial allocation in 2025, and if there are remaining funds, they can roll forward to 2026 providing the roll forward amount is not more than half of the region's riparian funding.
 - Option 2a: Adjust grant timeline to allow approval by board in either September and/or December.
 - Option 2b: Allow regions to shift unused funding to meet riparian needs in other regions. This could be voluntary, or board directed.

Chair Breckel noted regions and lead entities have expressed support for Option 2 and asked for clarification on why some groups wanted September while others wanted December approval. Ms. Moore explained that some lead entities were concerned it was too late to develop projects for the fall and were not planning to solicit riparian funding this year. Having a December process allows flexibility for the lead entities that need more time. **Member Endresen-Scott** asked if regions have projects on which they plan to spend the 2023-2025 unspent funds. Ms. Moore answered yes, and the additional time would be useful for any additional funding. **Member Cottingham** was comfortable extending funding to December this time; however, going forward, funding should be on the September schedule. **Chair Breckel** and **Member Cram** agreed. **Member Cram** noted the biggest risk is if funds are swept after the first year of the biennium and

thought Option 2 made the most sense. **Member Maroney** and **Member Kanzler** agreed. **Director Duffy** noted there will be a better understanding if the riparian program will be funded at the end of March. **Chair Breckel** suggested setting September as the goal with the ability to come back in December one time in this grant round.

Motion: Move that we (the Salmon Recovery Funding Board) allow and encourage regions to use their entire biennial allocation in 2025, and if there are remaining funds, they can roll forward some funds to 2026 providing the roll forward amount is not more than half of the region's riparian funding. In addition, our preference is they bring their list to the board in September, although we would accept a region with legitimate reasons for bringing their list in December 2025, and further, that we allow the regions to shift unused funding to meet the needs in other regions.

Moved by: Member **Cottingham**

Seconded by: Member **Endresen-Scott**

Approved: **Approved as amended**

Public Comment

Melissa Speeg, Puget Sound Partnership salmon recovery manager, on behalf of lead entities and partners in the Puget Sound region, shared Option 2 support. Of the \$9 million the region received in 2023-2025 biennium, less than \$16,000 is unallocated. The need in the Puget Sound is large. Additionally, some lead entities were not aware there was potential for riparian funding in the 2025 grant round. The flexibility in Option 2a allows lead entities to solicit more projects from sponsors and will allow more project funding to be allocated.

Member Cottingham suggested amending the motion by striking the word "legitimate" from the motion. **Member Endresen-Scott** accepted the amendment.

Item 7: Mid-Columbia Regional Presentation

Alex Conley was unable to present, and this item was removed during agenda approval.

Item 8: State of the Salmon Report Update

Erik Neatherlin provided an overview of the [2024 State of the Salmon Report](#). The final executive summary report is expected to be complete by the end of March. The organization of the executive summary and many of the key challenges are the same

since the last update. The report overall is shorter. In general, there has been modest progress for adult abundance for some species and there are still increasing challenges.

Mr. Neatherlin highlighted the Salmon Abundance chart, a frequently used graphic that shows salmon abundance by species and their standing. Since 2022, Columbia River chum, Lower Columbia coho, and Upper Columbia steelhead populations have improved some. Notably, middle Columbia steelhead trout moved from not keeping pace to in crisis, backsliding some.

Member Maroney asked if there is a time series that shows where improvements are being made, spatially. Mr. Neatherlin answered that comparing across three reports (six years) could be done, but going back too far may not be an accurate comparison.

A 2011 study notes the statewide cost of implementing habitat-related elements identified in regional salmon recovery plans for 2010-2019 at \$4.7 billion in 2011 dollars. To date, \$2.1 billion has been invested. As construction costs increase and habitats continue to decline, increased investment is needed. While there have been increases in available funding, it is still not keeping pace with the need.

Mr. Neatherlin explained the struggles facing salmon including predation; stormwater and pollution; fish passage barriers; climate and warming waters; hydropower, hatcheries, and harvest; and habitat degradation and restoration. Details in the report on recovery around the state, key takeaways per region, and more, can be found online at stateofsalmon.wa.gov.

BREAK 2:30 P.M. – 2:45 P.M.

Item 9: Completed Projects

Amee Bahr, outdoor grants manager, highlighted the Scaffold Camp ([RCO #22-1514](#)) sponsored by the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation to provide high quality, year-round rearing habitat for Chinook salmon and steelhead and bull trout on the Twisp River. This project established a 1,200-foot-long perennial flowing side channel, which increased instream structural complexity, reconnected side channels, increased floodplain connectivity, and restored habitat forming processes. The board provided \$402,376 and the sponsor provided \$241,726 in match from the Bonneville Power Administration's Fish Accords, for a total project cost of \$644,102.

Chair Breckel asked if any fish monitoring was occurring. Ms. Bahr noted fish came in immediately, and was sure the Yakama Nation would conduct some monitoring.

Josh Lambert, outdoor grants manager, provided an overview of Skookum Creek River Mile 6.5 Restoration ([RCO #20-1090](#)) sponsored by the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group. The project benefits all life stages of coho and chum salmon and cutthroat trout. Restoration included main-stem, riparian, and off-channel treatments; installation of large wood clusters to provide gravel retention; planting native tree cover and providing weed control in the riparian area; and removing reed canary grass to maintain groundwater channels for juvenile salmonid rearing. Riparian funding in 2024 and discussions with the local resident led to a more robust planting. The board provided \$266,050 and the sponsor provided \$46,950 in match, for a total project cost of \$313,000.

Chair Breckel asked if planting had begun. Mr. Lambert answered no, but it will begin soon and occur over the next two years.

Kat Moore presented the Lower Dungeness River Floodplain Restoration ([RCO #16-1372](#)) sponsored by Clallam County and Dungeness Rivers Edge Restoration ([RCO #20-2024](#)) sponsored by the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, two adjacent large-scale restoration projects in the lower Dungeness River. The projects included a levee removal and dike setback, reconnecting over 170 acres of historic floodplain, and restoring natural processes and riparian vegetation. The funding for the total project, including the acquisitions that happened prior to restoration, totaled around \$17 million with over \$2 million in match. Ms. Moore highlighted the complex series of acquisitions necessary to set the restoration projects up for success, the opportunities to expand the scope of the project, and the partnerships that were critical to the completion of the project. Notably, this project won the Engineering in Excellence Award and additional awards from the North Olympic Land Trust, the American Society of Civil Engineers, and state and national awards from American Council of Engineering Consultants.

Member Cram asked if it was a coincidence that the adjacent farm was for sale at the necessary time. Ms. Moore answered yes, and sponsors were able to pivot quickly using direct National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration funds to acquire it.

Member Hoffmann remembers, from her time at the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Dungeness hatchery being worried about flood risk and asked if this project will lessen the flood risk to the hatchery. Ms. Moore answered this project should reduce flood risk in the area.

Item 10: Partner Reports

This item was presented before Item 4: Intensively Monitored Watershed Program: The Path Forward.

Washington Conservation Commission

Member Levi Keesecker shared the Washington Conservation Commission is in the process of updating their program guidelines and will seek authorization at their March meeting to open the draft guidelines for public comment.

Regarding the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, the commission is working through contracts with Whatcom County to see what producers might need. The commission does not yet have access to the rest of the state's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program results and is unsure if the Farm Services Administration currently has a state director.

Chair Breckel asked for an explanation of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program process, noting there have been concerns by advocates and participants of the program who have experienced their land being withdrawn from the program. **Member Keesecker** explained the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is working on auditing other parts of the state to identify potential contracting issues, and the commission is working with conservation districts to reduce confusion; however, there have been challenges communicating with the Farm Services Administration and critical information is lacking.

Department of Ecology

Member Annette Hoffmann highlighted that Director Casey Sixkiller was confirmed as the Department of Ecology's new director. The Department of Ecology continues to present information to groups working on 6PPD-quinone through workshops. The Stormwater Strategic Initiative Lead and the Puget Sound Partnership led a series of workshops with interest groups to revise the Action Agenda and advance Puget Sound recovery, including 6PPD-quinone toxics reduction.

Three laboratories have been accredited to analyze 6PPD-quinone in water samples. Accreditation is important to ensure data is high-quality and reliable for regulatory purposes.

Finally, the Department of Ecology is funding over [twenty research studies](#) assessing how effective stormwater best management practices are at mitigating 6PPD-quinone.

Member Hoffmann highlighted a [Pierce County study](#) assessing the effectiveness of decant facility treatment. The combination of setting, flocculation, and granular activated carbon reduced 6PPD-quinone levels to below three nanograms per liter, which is less than the Aquatic Life Toxics criteria of twelve nanograms per liter.

Department of Natural Resources

Member Tom Gorman shared that Commissioner Dave Upthegrove was sworn in and the transition has been smooth.

The Department of Natural Resources has several bills in Legislature this session, including [Senate Bill 5157](#), which increases the department's ability to sell valuable materials for habitat restoration from \$25,000 up to \$250,000 for direct sale. [Senate Bill 5390](#) would increase the Discover Pass fee from thirty dollars to forty-five dollars. [House Bill 1631](#) would establish kelp as the state marine forest.

The Department of Natural Resources is requesting funding to continue tire pile removals. In 2024, over 4,500 tires were removed from two locations in the Puget Sound; there are tens of thousands more tires needing removal, with some sites already permitted.

The Whiteman Cove restoration project is nearly complete, with all the water work done. Road access and upland work still needs completion.

The Department of Natural Resources is also seeking additional funding for derelict structure removal. In 2024, a large pier was removed in Neah Bay and the Dickman Mill project removed over 1,000 pilings near Tacoma.

Chair Breckel asked if the department will address tire piles that are not on state-owned lands. **Member Gorman** noted state-owned aquatic lands are targeted first, and the department looks for opportunities where projects could be combined with privately-owned land, similar to how the marine debris removal program operates.

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Member Jeremy Cram noted the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has request legislation that would modify fish and wildlife violations, changing low-level violations to civil infractions that could be ticketed by officers rather than going through prosecution.

[Senate Bill 5583](#) would increase fishing and hunting license fees by nearly 40 percent. [House Bill 2003](#) would reinstate the Columbia River recreational salmon and steelhead endorsement program.

The Washington Legislature in [House Joint Memorial 4004](#) wrote a letter to Congress and the president asking to update the Marine Mammal Protection Act to allow more discretion at the state level for pinniped removal related to Endangered Species Act salmon populations. This was previously done at the mouth of the Columbia River, and

this letter would expand the permission statewide, mostly to the Pacific coast and Puget Sound where pinniped predation issues exist.

Washington State Department of Transportation

Member Susan Kanzler shared that Julie Meredith was appointed as the new secretary of transportation.

The Washington State Department of Transportation submitted their agency budget request to the Office of Financial Management and the Governor's Office in September. The 2025-2027 biennium request focuses on essential operations and highest priority needs. Investments are critical to our transportation system's future and directly affect safety, efficiency, and reliability of infrastructure and are necessary to meet obligations of Washington State, including fish passage, maintenance and preservation, ferries, and highway safety. Former Governor Inslee's budget included an additional \$120 million for fish passage. Governor Ferguson's team has agreed to share the budget priorities with Legislature. The next revenue forecast for the transportation budget is expected in the week of March 20, and the budget bills will likely be available the following week.

Member Kanzler provided an update on the Culvert Injunction. Washington State, along with twenty-one case-area Tribes that are involved in the federal Culvert Injunction, filed a joint motion with the Ninth Circuit Court on February 26 to direct the injunction parties towards mediation. Governor Ferguson's office has been closely involved in discussions leading to mediation. The State is represented by solicitor general Noah Purcell of the State's Attorney General's Office, who argued the case when it reached the Supreme Court in 2018.

The Washington Department of Transportation constructed thirty-four fish passage projects in the summer of 2024. There were forty-seven projects total in construction; however, some of those are multi-season construction projects expected to be completed this summer. The department is on track to complete forty fish passage projects in summer 2025. **Member Kanzler** highlighted the completion of the Chico Creek project on State Route 3 in Kitsap County. The project constructed a 205-foot full-spanning bridge over State Route 3, providing access to nearly twenty-two miles of potential habitat for Chinook, chum and coho salmon, and steelhead, cutthroat, and resident trout. Following construction of the bridge, one of the largest chum salmon runs was observed in the fall.

Lastly, Washington State Department of Transportation is committed to mitigating harmful effects of stormwater runoff and recognizes the connection between stormwater management and salmon recovery. The department is looking at retrofitting

opportunities on every fish passage project to add treatment for existing impervious surfaces when cost effective. This ensures that fish can return to higher quality habitat after a barrier is removed. The coastal fish passage bundle on the Olympic Peninsula, which is currently correcting twenty-nine fish passage barriers, is planning for opportunistic stormwater treatment at most of the sites. In addition to the fish passage projects, all transportation projects are looking for opportunities to treat stormwater when working through standard environmental review processes on all projects.

ADJOURN: 2:11 P.M.

Motion:	<u>Move to adjourn.</u>
Moved by:	Member Maroney
Seconded by:	Member Endresen-Scott
Approved:	Approved

Board Tour Overview

Action Requested: Briefing

Summary

This is an overview of the projects the Salmon Recovery Funding Board will see on its 2025 tour. The tour will feature projects in three lead entities in the Puget Sound region: the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed Lead Entity (WRIA 8), the Green/Duwamish and Central Puget Sound Watershed Lead Entity (WRIA 9), and the Puyallup and Chambers Watershed Salmon Recovery Lead Entity.

Overview of Projects

Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8)

Cedar River Royal Arch Habitat Enhancement, 22-1191

Seattle Public Utilities

This is a completed project for a highly successful side channel habitat and floodplain reconnection on the lower Cedar River immediately north (downstream) of state route 169 and state route 18 highway crossing in King County.



Seattle Public Utilities

constructed thousands of feet of new and enhanced off-channel rearing habitat for Cedar River salmon, the most limiting habitat type for productivity of juvenile Chinook in the Cedar River. The project is in a top-tier priority area for Chinook recovery in the Lake Washington watershed.

More than 700 pieces of large wood were used to create approximately 150 instream structures in a sixteen-acre project area. The structures created or enhanced more than 3,000 feet of site-channel stream habitat and approximately 3.5 acres of new riparian wetland connected to the Cedar River perennially.

This project was originally funded for design and permitting in January 2021; the project was bid for construction in early 2023, and substantial completion of construction occurred in December 2023. It is now being maintained for native plan recovery and monitored for a variety of metrics related to successful implementation. The project represents a substantial gain in meeting the goals for off-channel salmon habitat in the 2017 updated WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Plan.

Table 1: Funding, Project 22-1191

Funding Source	Funding Amount	Percent
Puget Sound Acquisition & Restoration	\$1,457,510	
Salmon State Projects	\$174,861	
Salmon State Supplemental	\$511,717	
Total RCO award:	\$2,144,088	85%
Sponsor match:	\$378,368	15%
Total Project Cost:	\$2,522,456	

Green/Duwamish and Central Puget Sound Watershed (WRIA 9)

Flaming Geyser State Park Riparian Revegetation

King County Water and Land Resources

This site visit will highlight riparian revegetation work sponsored by King County in the Green River watershed. Salmon Recovery Funding Board projects that reflect this work include Flaming Geyser State Park Riparian Revegetation (21-1002; status: complete) and Flaming Geyser Restoration (22-1044; status: active). There has also been investment in this effort from other fund sources.

The project sites are in public ownership and identified by the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe as areas with high or critical need for shade. Restoring native riparian vegetation will benefit Chinook and steelhead. Historic removal of tall trees from the banks of the river

allowed too much sunlight to reach the water, resulting in summertime water temperatures that frequently exceed state water quality standards and the lethal threshold for salmon. As part of a Green River corridor planning process in 2014, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe prioritized shorelines based on where trees would most effectively shade the river based on solar aspect. Additional analyses of temperature trends were



undertaken on data from 2015, which was one of the warmest water years on record. These studies informed WRIA 9's 2016 Re-Green the Green Vegetation Strategy, which set goals and named priority reaches for revegetating the Green-Duwamish River. The reach of the Green River that flows through Flaming Geyser State Park was a high priority in both the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and WRIA 9 assessments.

For Flaming Geyser State Park Riparian Revegetation (21-1002), King County restored eight acres of riparian habitat along 0.4 miles of Green River shoreline at Flaming Geyser State Park in areas devoid of trees, by removing invasive plants and planting native trees and shrubs.

Table 2: Funding, Project 21-1002

Type	Amount	Percent
Salmon Federal Projects	\$163,018	
Salmon State Projects	\$132,877	
Total RCO award:	\$295,895	74%
Sponsor match:	\$104,105	26%
Total Project Cost:	\$400,000	

Puyallup and Chambers Watershed Salmon Recovery Lead Entity

White River LB RM 2.5-4.2; 20-1102

City of Sumner

City of Sumner will construct the White River Left Bank River Mile 2.5 - 4.2 Restoration Project to restore 201 acres of floodplain, riparian, and wetland habitat in the Lower White River, including 3.5 miles of in-stream habitat. Restoring a functional floodplain corridor includes lowering the floodplain to substantially



increase the frequency and duration of overbank flows inundation and allow for new channel creation. Floodplain connectivity will expand the river's potential to form and sustain new aquatic habitat throughout the reach. Wetland areas will be installed to allow development of forested areas that will provide shade to cool water temperatures, filtration to increase water quality, detrital matter to support prey resources, and trees for future wood recruitment. Engineered log jams and complex woody retaining walls will support formation of in-stream habitat and production of prey resources and provide bank stability during large flood events. In-stream structures will support diverse and complex in-stream habitat overtime to support spawning, migration and rearing. Sumner Link Trail will be rerouted onto the forested berm along the eastern edge of the project, so it is mostly outside of the floodplain. Initial grading on the project began in 2024.

Table 3: Funding, Project 20-1102

Funding Source	Amount	Percent
Puget Sound Acquisition & Restoration, Large Capital Projects	\$14,641,123	
Puget Sound Acquisition & Restoration	\$2,636,035	
Total RCO award:	\$17,277,158	87%
Sponsor match:	\$2,583,728	13%
Total Project Cost:	\$19,860,886	

Puyallup and Chambers Watershed Salmon Recovery Lead Entity

White River Acquisition and Setback Levee; 07-1910

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks

King County Department of Natural Resources acquired two parcels along the White River with this funding. This grant provided the acquisition funding for a large-scale restoration project to setback a levee at the King-Pierce County border along the left bank of the White River at approximately river mile 5.2.



King County also developed preliminary designs for the levee setback project with this funding. King County completed the Countyline levee setback project in 2017.

After removal of the old levee, a side channel formed in the floodplain. This provides year-round habitat for spring-run Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. Native plants are growing throughout the floodplain and along the levee where there are close to 60,000 new plantings. Beaver, deer, waterfowl, songbirds, birds of prey, and other wildlife are using the improved habitat along the river. The project also provides a place to store river sediments and flood water, reducing flood risk.

Table 4: Funding for Project 07-1910

Funding Source	Amount	Percent
Puget Sound Acquisition & Restoration	\$731,461	
Salmon Federal Projects	\$91,563	
Total RCO award:	\$823,024	85%
Sponsor match	\$145,240	15%
Total Project Cost	\$968,264	

Item 6: Director's Report

Summary

This is a summary of work happening around the agency and includes an update on staffing, the budget, and performance measures.

Action Requested: Briefing

Agency Update

New Report on Status of Salmon Released

The Governor's Salmon Recovery Office released its biennial report on the status of salmon in Washington.

Of the fourteen salmon species of salmon and steelhead in Washington listed as at risk of extinction under the federal Endangered Species Act, four are improving and two are approaching recovery goals. However, eight still are struggling or in crisis. The report, the *State of Salmon in Watersheds* report, and [website](#). Climate change is exacerbating the challenges salmon face, such as loss of habitat, waters that are too warm, and more wildfires that destroy shade-providing trees on riverbanks.

The report also described many accomplishments, such as 3,866 barriers to fish passage have been corrected; 5,102 miles of stream have been made accessible to salmon; and more than 53,000 acres along waterways were restored since 2005.



Salmon Projects Helped by Climate Commitment Act

Salmon recovery projects across the state got a big boost when the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) awarded more than \$71 million in grants for nearly seventy projects, funded by the Climate Commitment Act.



The act, created by the Legislature in 2021, requires the state's largest polluters to reduce greenhouse gas pollution, a known cause of climate change. Money from the act is invested in programs to help communities reduce climate pollution and be more resilient, create jobs, and improve public health.

In total, \$71.3 million was awarded to sixty-nine projects in twenty-one of Washington's thirty-nine counties. Grant recipients provided an additional \$30.6 million in matching resources or other grants for a total investment of nearly \$102 million in salmon recovery.

Some of the largest projects include conserving eight hundred acres in the Grays River watershed in southwest Washington, removing structures such as levees in the Tucannon River to improve habitat and natural floodplain connectivity, and restoring 2.6 miles of stream habitat and 110 acres of floodplain in the headwaters South Fork Toutle River valley. Read the [news release](#) or see a [list of the funded projects](#).

Employee Updates



Kathleen Barkis, an administrative assistant, will retire June 30 after twenty years with the agency. She served as receptionist for many years and more recently has helped digitize RCO records.



DeAnn Beck, senior outdoor grants manager for the Recreation and Conservation Section, will retire July 1 after nearly forty years of state service including seven of them at RCO.



Sandy Dotts, a grants manager for the Salmon Section, retired in April after twenty-four years of state service including twenty-one years as at the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife before she joined RCO in 2021.



Leslie Frank, the administrative services manager, will retire June 1 after more than thirty-five years of state service. She started as an executive assistant and her duties grew to include human resources, facilities, safety, and office management.



Sarah Johnson Humphries, manager of the Cultural Resources Unit, left RCO March 31 to work for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. She was hired as RCO's first archaeologist three years ago and soon promoted to lead the unit.



Stephanie Jolivette joined RCO May 16 as the manager of the Cultural Resources Unit. She came from the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, where she served as the local government archaeologist for nearly seven years. Before that, Stephanie was a contract archaeologist.



Anna Krumpos joined RCO May 16 as the administrative assistant for the Recreation and Conservation Section. She came from the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, where she supported more than fifty staff members as the administrative assistant for Child Nutrition Services.



Anita Macpherson joined RCO on May 19 as the administrative services manager. She came from Kent School District where she served as director of employment support. Before that, she held several leadership roles with the district throughout the years, including assistant principal and assistant director of employment support.



Kat Moore was promoted to salmon section manager on April 1. Kat has worked her way up through RCO, beginning as a salmon grants manager in 2010, promoting to a senior grants manager in 2013, then to the assistant section manager in 2024 before taking on this new role.



Monica Handwerk, an administrative assistant for the Recreation and Conservation Grants Section, moved to North Carolina and will finish working for RCO in mid-June.



Nick Reinhardt, RCO's first policy intern, left RCO at the end of April. Nick took on a huge project and updated a statewide trails database.

News from the Boards

The Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group met April 30 and shared notable acquisitions and initiatives from the legislative session and discussed the decision-making process for next year concerning the extension of the group.

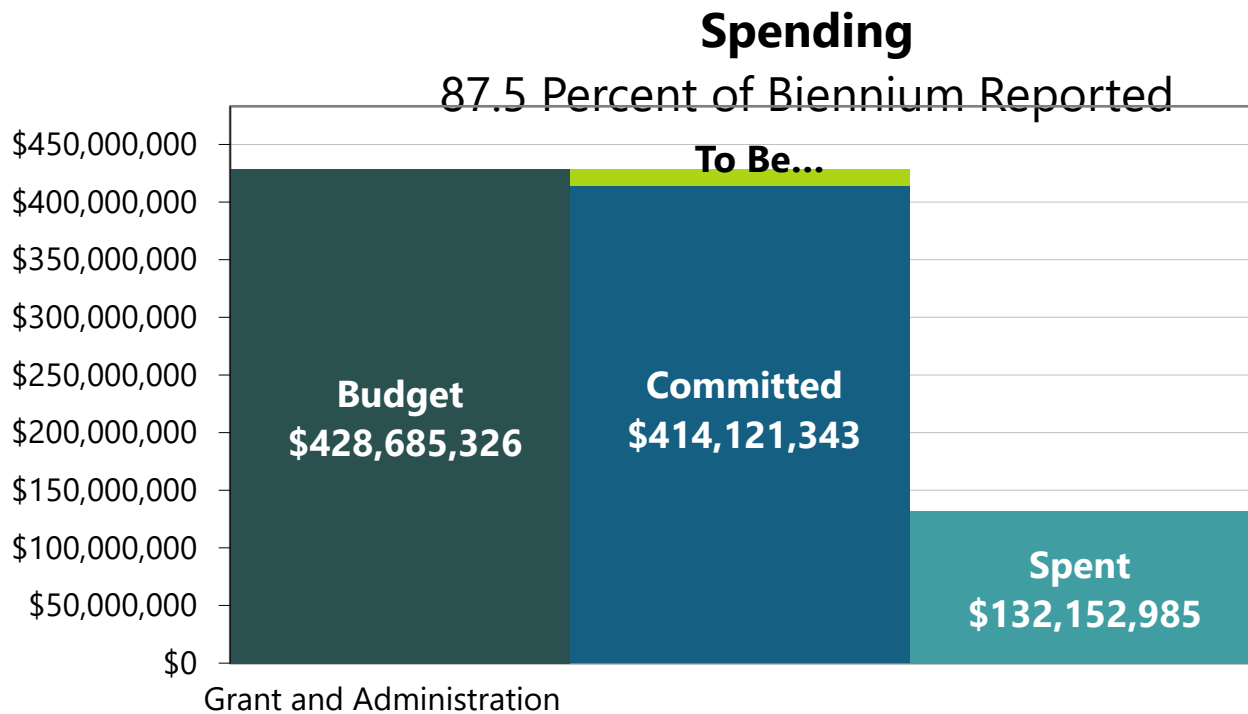
The Invasive Species Council met March 20 and heard updates on the aquatic species of greatest concern from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and on the Puget Sound Action Agenda update. The council began updating its strategic plan and bylaws and planned future meetings.

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board met April 22 and approved changes to the acquisition policy manual; changes to the location criteria in the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's Urban Wildlife Habitat Category that affects project eligibility; and the preliminary ranked list of projects in four grant programs. The board also reviewed four grant proposals in the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The board heard about potential policy changes in the Natural Areas, Critical Habitat, and Farmland Preservation Categories of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.

Policy Update

Staff will provide a summary of the 2025 legislative session. This will include bills that impact RCO's work and an overview of budget. Further, staff will provide information on items that will impact the 2026 legislative session.

Fiscal Update



Performance Update

The following data displays grant management and project impact performance measures for fiscal year 2025. Data included is specific to projects funded by the board and current as of May 1, 2025.

Project Impact Performance Measures

The following tables provide an overview of the fish passage accomplishments funded by the board in fiscal year 2025. Grant sponsors submit these performance measure data for blockages removed, fish passages installed, and stream miles made accessible when a project is completed and closing. The Forest Family Fish Passage Program, Coastal Restoration Initiative Program, Chehalis Basin Strategy, Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board, and the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program are not included in these totals.

So far, twenty-three salmon blockages were removed this fiscal year (July 1, 2024, to May 1, 2025), and fifteen passageways installed (Table 1). These projects have cumulatively opened 22.47 miles of stream (Table 2).

Table 1: Blockage Removal and Passage-way Installation projects

Measure	Fiscal Year 2025 Performance
Blockages Removed	23
Bridges Installed	8
Culverts Installed	3
Fish Ladders Installed	1
Fishway Chutes Installed	3






Table 2: Projects with Stream Miles Opened

Project Number	Project Name	Primary Sponsor	Funding Program	Stream Miles
20-1463	2020 Little Squalicum Estuary Restoration	Bellingham	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account	0.40
20-1080	Baird Creek Liberation-Splash Dam Removal	Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group	Salmon Federal Projects	0.80
22-1040	Camp Cr at Schafer Boom Road Fish Barrier Correction	Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force	Salmon State Supplemental	0.13
18-1490	Cedar Grove Fish Passage Improvement	Skagit County	Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration	0.25
22-1132	Coal Creek Fish Passage Restoration	Trout Unlimited Inc.	Salmon Federal Projects	1.78
21-1205	Duncan Springs Thermal Refugia Project	Kalispel Tribe of Indians	Salmon State Projects	0.06
20-1374	Lower Day Slough Fish Passage Improvement	Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group	Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration	0.65
19-1346	Lower Horn Creek Fish Passage	South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group	Salmon Federal Projects	0.40
21-1203	Rattlesnake Gulch Fish Passage and Restoration 2021	Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group	Salmon State Projects	3.60

Project Number	Project Name	Primary Sponsor	Funding Program	Stream Miles
21-1052	Springbrook Creek Preserve Protection and Restoration	Bainbridge Island Land Trust	Salmon State Projects	0.22
22-1003	Steptoe Creek Culvert 2 Replacement	Palouse Conservation District	Salmon Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Projects	4.00
19-1427	The Ranch on Swauk Creek	Kittitas County Conservation District	Salmon Federal Projects	7.00
19-1721	Yakima Fish Passage Targeted Investment Projects	Kittitas County Conservation District	Salmon State Projects	3.18
Total:				22.47

The table below summarizes fiscal year 2025 operational performance measures as of May 1, 2025

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Performance Measures

Measure	Target	Fiscal Year-to-Date	Status	Notes
Percent of Salmon Projects Issued Agreement within 120 Days of Board Funding	90%	58%		146 agreements for board-funded projects were due to be mailed this fiscal year to date. Staff issued eighty-five agreements within 120 days, averaging 109 days.
Percent of Salmon Progress Reports Responded to On Time (fifteen days or less)	90%	92%		584 progress reports were due this fiscal year to date for board-funded projects. Staff responded to 537 in fifteen days or less. On average, staff responded within six days.
Percent of Salmon Bills Paid within 30 days	100%	100%		During this fiscal year to date, 1506 bills were due for board-funded projects. All were paid on time.
Percent of Projects Closed on Time	85%	84%		Seventy board-funded projects were scheduled to close. So far, this fiscal year fifty-nine of them closed on time.
Number of Projects in Project Backlog	5	7		Seven board-funded projects are in the backlog and need to be closed out.

Item 7: Salmon Recovery Management Report

Action Requested: Briefing

Summary

This memo summarizes recent work completed by the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office and the Recreation and Conservation Office's Salmon Recovery Grants Section.

Governor's Salmon Recovery Office Report

Partner Activities

Federal Affairs

The Governor's Salmon Recovery Office (GSRO) assisted the Governor's Office in Washington DC in securing the 5-state (Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Alaska) Governors' letter of support for federal fiscal year 2026's Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Funds. The letter can be seen in Attachment A. Similar letters of support are in progress for the Senate and House, led by Senator Cantwell and Congressman Larsen. GSRO continued its coordination with the five Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund states around potential travel back to Washington, DC this coming fall.

GSRO staff attended Puget Sound Day on the Hill representing the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Funding states in Washington, DC during the week of April 28. The Puget Sound Day on the Hill delegation is comprised of a wide array of interests including but not limited to Tribes, elected officials, local governments, Ports, industry, non-governmental and community organizations, and state agencies. The delegation visited with Congressional Members from across the US, including Oregon, Idaho, Alaska, California, Montana, Michigan, Louisiana, New York, and others. The main topics of the meetings were federal fiscal year 2026 budget and policy priorities for programs that advance Puget Sound and Salmon Recovery. Some of the key programs include Environmental Protection Agency funding for National Estuary Programs and Geographic Programs, National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Association funding for the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund, and funding for invasive species. More information on priorities and messages can be found [here](#).

GSRO and RCO worked with the Governor's Office on a joint letter opposing proposed removal of National Environmental Policy Act implementing regulations. This can be found in Attachment B. GSRO and RCO also signed a joint agency letter led by the Governor's Office and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife opposing a proposed rule to rescind the definition of "harm" under the Endangered Species Act. Rescinding the current definition of "harm" will negatively impact implementation of Endangered Species Act and will reduce overall effectiveness and protections currently afforded under Endangered Species Act.

Presentations and Meetings

GSRO was keynote speaker at the 2025 Climate Education Summit held in Vancouver, Washington hosted by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. GSRO presented on the power of salmon to bring people together to solve problems. GSRO continued planning with Pacific Salmon Foundation and Department of Oceans Canada on their virtual Knowledge Exchange Workshops. The next workshop is scheduled for June 11, titled [From Watersheds to Waves: Restoring Estuaries for Salmon](#).

Coordination

GSRO staff continued quarterly coordination meetings with Tribal organizations across the state, including the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Upper Columbia United Tribes and individual Tribes as requested. GSRO staff will be meeting in person with the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission sometime in the summer.

GSRO staff continued to attend Council of Regions meetings and individual regional salmon recovery board meetings, Washington Salmon Coalition meetings, and Puget Sound Watershed Coalition meetings. GSRO staff also continues to coordinate and collaborate with Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups.

Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund Application

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration submitted their fiscal year 2025 Continuing Resolution budget to Congress by April 28, 2025. RCO staff expect to hear soon about the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund 2025 award.

Monitoring

2025 Regional Monitoring Grant Round

The new board regional monitoring grant program kicked off earlier this year with the submission of seventeen letters of intent from five of the regional recovery organizations. The total request was approximately \$4.5 million. After regions narrowed their applications down to the two-project limit, nine applications were submitted on May 1, 2025, for a total request of \$2.5 million. The Science Advisory Panel heard presentations from sponsors May 15-16 and provided comments on each application. Applicants are now finalizing applications which are due in the PRISM database on June 23. Science panel review and scoring will occur in mid-July and funding decisions will be made at the September board meeting. A total of \$973,855 is available for the 2025 grant round. The list of projects is captured below.

Table 1: Regional Monitoring Project Applications Submitted

Region	Name	Sponsor(s)
Coast	Smolt residency time and survival through estuary (Gray's Harbor)	Coast Salmon Partnership
Coast	Species distributions for Willapa Bay tributaries	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Puget Sound	Puget Sound Juvenile Salmon Offshore Monitoring	Tulalip Tribes
Puget Sound	Port Susan Restoration Effectiveness Monitoring	The Nature Conservancy
Lower Columbia	Lower East Fork Grays Sediment Transport	Cowlitz Indian Tribe
Lower Columbia	Spawning survey and escapement in Lower Columbia	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Yakima	Yakima River Mobile Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) Tag Detection Surveys	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Upper Columbia	Methow Subbasin Habitat Status and Trend Monitoring	Colville Confederated Tribes
Upper	Life stage survival of juvenile steelhead in Wenatchee	Washington

Region	Name	Sponsor(s)
Columbia		Department of Fish and Wildlife

Fish Monitoring Inventory

In September 2024, the board set aside funding to initiate a statewide monitoring inventory of salmon population data and information. The project is being coordinated by GSRO and the regional salmon recovery organizations. The project will compile a statewide summary of high-level, regionally specific data gaps related to salmon recovery and restoration planning. The goal is not to compile data but rather to compile information about data collection, analysis, compilation, and reporting of data across the state. GSRO recognizes that these data are collected for a variety of purposes beyond salmon recovery. Four Peaks Environmental is the project consultant and has been gathering information from publicly available sources. In addition, GSRO staff have been coordinating with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Columbia River Intertribal Fisheries Commission, and Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission to gather information. The plan is to complete the inventory by the end of 2025.

Knowledge Exchange Workshop

GSRO staff continues to partner with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Pacific Salmon Foundation to convene the virtual [Knowledge Exchange Workshop Series](#). The next workshop is focused on estuary restoration and is scheduled for June 11. The workshop will include speakers such as Jonathan Moore from Simon Fraser University and Greg Hood from the Skagit River System Cooperative, and case studies from the Columbia, Nisqually, Fraser, and Skeena estuaries.

Governor's Salmon Strategy

GSRO will convene the Natural Resources Subcabinet in September to discuss the state's response to salmon recovery, including supplemental budget and policy priorities that implement the statewide salmon strategy. GSRO staff also lead frequent interagency meetings to inform priorities considered at subcabinet meetings and ensure coordination on key legislation impacting recovery outcomes.

GSRO held Salmon Recovery Network check-ins throughout the legislative session. The Salmon Recovery Network provides a space for all state agencies, Tribal governments, board members, regional directors, lead entities, non-profit organizations, and local governments to discuss emerging salmon recovery issues. GSRO provides legislative policy and budget updates to this forum.

Riparian

The Riparian Task Force met monthly through the first half of 2025 to further develop implementation recommendations, as well as discuss potential next steps if the Task Force receives continued funding from the legislature. GSRO continues to facilitate the State Riparian Coordination Work Group in advance of each Task Force meeting to support state coordination and alignment needs. GSRO also participates in state-federal riparian coordination efforts to connect and align funding, program development and monitoring initiatives.

Orca Recovery

There are currently seventy-three Southern Resident killer whales. The Center for Whale Research has not included the birth (or death) of the new calf spotted in September. Its appearance was unhealthy and it has not been seen since. Another new calf was sighted in the population in April 2025, has a healthy appearance, and has been spotted with its mother.

A recent news article shared that researchers captured rare footage of Southern Resident killer whales in an uncommon location near Depoe Bay, Oregon. Marine biologists surmised they may be looking for Chinook salmon further South where the largest dam removal recently took place opening 400 miles of the Klamath River to salmon migration and spawning. This almost coincides with Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission's listing of Southern Resident killer whales as Endangered under Oregon law in February 2024. They adopted guidelines to direct relevant state agencies to:

- Further monitor and address pollutants, especially those posing the highest risk for Southern Resident orcas and their prey.
- Further increase boater education on the current federal vessel buffer guidelines to reduce vessel noise and disturbance.
- Assess the potential effects on Southern Resident orca communication, navigation, and foraging of projects planned in Oregon's coastal waters.
- Enhance hatchery Chinook salmon production if capacity and funding exist.
- Increase efforts to prevent oil and other hazardous material spills.

As the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association and many federal agencies are impacted by the Presidential Administration's staffing cuts and retirement offers, the Southern Resident killer whale program is also affected. Lynne Barre, long time killer whale coordinator at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association has announced her early retirement; she was with the Protected Resources Division for over twenty

years. GSRO will continue to work with the staff remaining, though the passback memo from Office of Budget and Management suggests moving the entire program to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Quiet Sound, through funding and collaboration from the Puget Sound Partnership, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, and the US Coast Guard, installed Washington State's first thermal imaging camera in Port Townsend. This camera uses Whale Spotter imaging to detect whales in data gaps of nighttime and poor visibility weather to add to the Whale Report Alert System, which alerts commercial mariners of whale presence, with the goal to decrease ship strikes and other interference with whale feeding and movement. The camera went live at 8pm on April 17, and the first orca was spotted at 10pm.

Salmon Recovery Grants Section Report

Staffing Update

In March, the salmon team welcomed Kat Moore as the new salmon Section Manager. Kat has been with RCO since 2010 and most recently was the Assistant Section Manager for the salmon team. RCO will recruit for the vacant Assistant Section Manager position after the budget has been approved by the governor.

2024 Project Agreements

RCO staff and grant recipients are working on executing agreements for the 95 salmon projects and 57 riparian projects funded by the board last September. As of May, eighty salmon projects and forty-four riparian projects have active grant agreements. Staff also executed agreements for three out of the seven Targeted Investment projects funded in January 2025.

2025 Grant Cycle

Staff have been making site visits for the 2025 grant round. There were forty-two projects submitted in "track 1", which includes projects from ten lead entities visited in February and March; and there were 108 projects submitted in "track 2", which includes projects from fifteen lead entities visited in April and May.

There are currently ninety-nine applications for regular salmon funding, with a combined total request of \$36,930,989. Of those ninety-nine applications, twenty-three

of them have included match in their applications totaling \$4,802,115. In addition to match, we have asked applicants to identify the “other funding” they will use to complete their projects, which is not documented as match. For the regular salmon projects, forty-five projects included “other funding” in their application, totaling \$14,073,854.

There are currently forty-nine applications for the riparian program, with a combined total request of \$19,197,996. Of the forty-nine applications, four have included match totaling \$1,839,225. Out of the forty-nine applications, twenty-one projects included “other funding” in their application, totaling \$10,279,672.

The review panel and staff met in March and May to review all applications submitted and provide applicants with review status and feedback. Applicants use that feedback to revise their applications and resubmit by the final deadline of June 23, 2025.

Salmon Recovery Funding Board Grant Administration

The following table shows projects funded by the board and administered by staff since 1999. The information is current as of May 1, 2025. This table does not include projects funded through the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board, Family Forest Fish Passage Program, the Washington Coast Restoration and Resiliency Initiative, or Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program. Although Recreation and Conservation Office staff support these programs through grant and contract administration, the board does not review or approve projects under these programs.

Table 2: Board-Funded Projects

	Pending Projects	Active Projects	Completed Projects	Total Funded Projects
Salmon Projects to Date	28	495	3,250	3,773
Percentage of Total	1%	13%	86%	

Attachments

- A. **Five-state Letter:** Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, and Alaska’s Governors’ letter of support for federal fiscal year 2026’s Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Funds.
- B. **Opposing Letters:** Joint letters opposing proposed removal of National Environmental Policy Act implementing regulations
- C. **Closed Projects:** lists projects that closed between February 3, 2025, and May 1, 2025. Each project number includes a link to information about the project (e.g.,

designs, photos, maps, reports, etc.). Staff closed out thirty-five projects or contracts during this time.

- D. **Approved Amendments:** shows the major amendments approved between February 3, 2025, and May 1, 2025. Staff processed thirteen cost change amendments during this period.

Attachment A: Five-state Letter



April 23, 2025

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chair, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, & Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chair, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, & Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, & Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Grace Meng
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, & Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Moran, Chair Rogers, and Ranking Members Van Hollen and Meng:

We are writing to express our support for robust federal investment in the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) in fiscal year 2026 (FY26). PCSRF is a critically important program aimed at recovering salmon and steelhead populations in Western states, and the economically and culturally-important commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries that are dependent upon them. We have appreciated your subcommittees' past support for this program, and we request that you appropriate at least \$70 million for PCSRF in FY26.

As you know, Pacific salmon play an essential role in the economy and habitat of Western states, dating back to long before the establishment of the United States. To this day, Pacific salmon fisheries provide jobs and support the livelihoods of thousands of Americans, and feed many more. Healthy salmon populations are essential to the health of these fisheries.

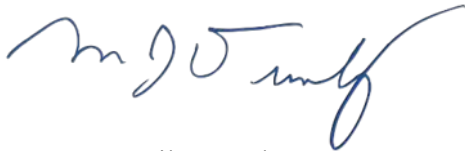
Pacific salmon populations, however, continue to face tremendous pressures. Today, 28 salmon and steelhead stocks face the threat of extinction on the West Coast. PCSRF was created to support the conservation and recovery of salmon across rivers, watersheds, and coastal habitats in Western states. Since 2000, this program has compelled effective, collaborative approaches to salmon recovery across federal, state, local, tribal, and private sector partners. In Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Idaho, California, and Nevada, PCSRF investments have contributed to over 16,778 projects, and have helped restore more than 12,144 miles of streams and over 1.2 million acres of fish habitat.

Furthermore, PCSRF directly supports economic activity and job creation, particularly in rural communities. Recent analysis shows that every \$1 million invested through PCSRF and state matching funds supports more than 16 jobs and generates about \$2.3 million in economic activity.

While important progress has been made, continued federal investment is crucial to maintaining this progress, and to achieving the goal of full recovery and a healthy, sustainable Pacific salmon fishery.

We thank your subcommittees for your past support and request your continued support for PCSRF. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Governor Mike Dunleavy
State of Alaska



Governor Gavin Newsom
State of California



Governor Brad Little
State of Idaho



Governor Tina Kotek
State of Oregon



Governor Bob Ferguson
State of Washington

CC: Members of the Alaska Congressional Delegation
 Members of the California Congressional Delegation
 Members of the Idaho Congressional Delegation
 Members of the Oregon Congressional Delegation
 Members of the Washington State Congressional Delegation



STATE OF WASHINGTON
— OFFICE OF GOVERNOR BOB FERGUSON —

March 26, 2025

Megan Healy
Principal Deputy Director for the National Environmental Policy Act
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place NW
Washington, DC 20503

Subject: Council on Environmental Quality, [Docket No. CEQ-2025-0002](#), Removal of National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Regulations

Dear Megan Healy:

On behalf of Washington state, I have grave concerns about the final interim rule change and need to express my resounding opposition to removing the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations that guide the federal application of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) under 40 CFR 1500-1508.

The NEPA regulations from CEQ have evolved over decades and provide a consistent framework for the application of NEPA. This elimination of CEQ's NEPA implementing regulations represents a major policy shift that will disrupt the nation's foundational environmental law.

In general, I am not opposed to developing methods to improve permitting timelines and the application of NEPA. However, the procedural jump to an interim final rule without state consultation and a full understanding of the effects of removing the primary guidance for NEPA by federal agencies is reckless and irresponsible, at best.

Removing these guidelines will almost certainly have the opposite effect as intended and delay projects through legal challenges and increased project timelines. Furthermore, without clear guidance from the CEQ, each federal agency is left to develop their own implementing procedures. This approach is inefficient and places environmental protection at risk.

I have included letters from Washington state agencies that developed analyses of how this rule could affect their work protecting human health and preserving environmental quality. Please find enclosed comments from the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Washington State Department of Health (DOH), Department of Archeology

Megan Healy
March 26, 2025
Page 2

and Historic Preservation (DAHP), Puget Sound Partnership (PSP), and Governor's Salmon Recovery Office (GRSO).

Efforts to streamline and expedite the NEPA process should not cause harm to the quality of our state's environment and human health. Please abandon this interim final rule. This misguided proposal will create more inefficiency, confusion and will increase costs to taxpayers in the long term and should immediately be withdrawn.

If you have any questions, please contact the Director of Federal and Interstate Affairs in my Washington D.C. Office, Rose Minor, at rose.minor@gov.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bob Ferguson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bob Ferguson
Governor

Enclosures



**STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY**

PO Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600 • 360-407-6000

March 27, 2025

The Honorable Katherine Scarlett
Chair Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place NW
Washington, DC 20503

RE: Docket Number CEQ-2025-0002

Dear Chair Scarlett:

On behalf of the Washington State Department of Ecology, I write to express our concerns with the Council on Environmental Quality's interim final rule to remove National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementing regulations. Our state has long supported NEPA as a bedrock environmental law that is critical to protecting the environment and public health. We are troubled by the lack of consultation with states and inadequate time provided for us to understand and respond to the impacts of CEQ's interim final rule. We are further concerned that the rule could cause significant harm to natural resources, endangered species, and human health in Washington as well as to the integrity, efficiency and consistency of the NEPA process.

The interim final rule would remove decades of NEPA regulations that ensure complete and consistent analysis of environmental impacts across federal agencies. This upending of long-standing processes and procedures sows unnecessary confusion, creates inconsistencies across agencies and will lead to less efficient processes for evaluating impacts and permitting projects – the antithesis of the purported rationale provided by the White House.

Overview

Washington State agencies, including Ecology, regularly engage in the NEPA process as cooperating and commenting agencies for proposals for which we have "jurisdiction by law" under 40 C.F.R. § 1508.15 and as agencies with special expertise under § 1508.15. Washington State also has an environmental review statute, the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), which is largely modeled after NEPA. State and local agencies have discretion to facilitate efficiencies in the SEPA process by "adopting" or incorporating by reference the environmental documents prepared under NEPA, on a case-by-case basis, if the analysis done under NEPA is sufficient to meet the requirements of SEPA.

The Removal of CEQ's NEPA Implementing Regulations Undermines Coordination of NEPA Process with Other Federal and State Regulatory Processes and Causes Unnecessary Confusion and Inefficiencies

By repealing the NEPA implementing regulations, federal agencies would be left with gaps in guidance that could lead to inconsistent and incomplete analyses. It is inefficient to require each individual agency to develop their own NEPA implementing rules without overarching direction. If CEQ repeals its rules, all federal agencies would be left to follow their own NEPA implementing regulations. Without the overarching consistency and thoroughness of CEQ's NEPA implementing regulations, agencies could make modifications that significantly weaken their NEPA regulations and therefore reduce the robustness of the subsequent environmental analysis. This would lead to different approaches and interpretations of NEPA across federal agencies. Many federal agencies' rules currently incorporate CEQ's NEPA rules by reference. The interim final rule will obscure the status of those rules, immediately generating confusion across the regulatory landscape. We work with multiple federal agencies, sometimes on the same project. Inconsistent approaches to fulfilling NEPA requirements and confusion around the status of existing NEPA implementing rules could lead to delays, duplicative work, critical gaps, and conflicting conclusions.

The removal of NEPA implementing regulations will also make it more difficult for states to rely on NEPA analyses for joint analyses of environmental impacts. In Washington, we follow the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), which sets forth a process for identifying and understanding environmental impacts associated with government decisions. For some projects, we conduct joint analyses under SEPA and NEPA. In other cases, we cite NEPA analyses in our SEPA analysis. This coordination is critical to efficiently inform decision making.

The CEQ Memorandum on the Implementation of NEPA Undermines the Intent of the Statute and Would Lead to Weak and Incomplete Analyses

On February 19, 2025, CEQ sent a memo to heads of federal departments and agencies directing them to consider a list of criteria when revising or establishing their NEPA implementing regulations. The criteria substantially limit the scope of effects and projects NEPA would consider. This could lead to incomplete analyses that undermine the requirement of Section 102 of the NEPA statute. Further, these limitations would reduce the ability for our state to use NEPA analyses to support SEPA analyses.

If federal agencies consider revising their NEPA procedures, it is imperative that they seek public comment on those changes, including comments from state agencies affected by actions of those agencies. States will have more specific local knowledge about the impacts of federal agencies in their respective states.

The Repeal of CEQ Rules would be Counterproductive to the Cleanup of Hanford

One example of the potential impacts of the repealing of CEQ rules is on the complex, multiagency effort to cleanup Hanford. At Hanford, CEQ's interim final rule will impact the important work Ecology conducts with its federal partners, namely the Department of Energy



and the Environmental Protection Agency, to clean up the most complex environmental remediation site in the country. Ecology relies on DOE's NEPA analyses to make programmatic permitting and siting decisions and ensure assess the potential environmental impacts of investigation and cleanup activities.

DOE adopted CEQ's NEPA implementing regulations. 10 CFR § 1021.103.

Although DOE has enacted some of its own NEPA rules, DOE's rules are expressly meant to supplement and be "used in conjunction with, the CEQ Regulations." 10 CFR § 1021.100. Therefore, CEQ's interim final rule renders the state of DOE's NEPA regulations unclear. The following changes to DOE practices, which are currently tied to CEQ's NEPA implementing rules, could create confusion, delays, and grave risk to human health and the environment:

- Timelines for publication of NEPA documents (10 CFR § 1021.213(d))
- Coordination of NEPA and SEPA reviews (10 CFR § 1021.215(b)(4); 10 CFR § 1021.301(a))
- Delegation of NEPA document preparation to contractors (10 CFR § 1021.215)
- NEPA review of DOE's actions pursuant to contracts or awards of financial assistance (10 CFR § 1021.216(i))
- Scope and procedures for preparing NEPA documents. [10 CFR § 1021.310 (Environmental Impact Statements); 10 CFR § 1021.311(a) (Notices of Intent); 10 CFR § 1021.315(b) (Records of Decision); 10 CFR § 1021.320 and 10 CFR § 1021.321 (Environmental Assessments)]
- Responses to public comments (10 CFR § 1021.313(c))
- Policies regarding emergency variances to NEPA rules (10 CFR § 1021.343)

Hanford is but one example that illustrates the importance of consistent and thorough NEPA analyses on sites where state and federal agencies are working together. Ecology works on many complex sites with state and federal collaboration that will be less efficient and effective if NEPA regulations are repealed.

Finally, we are concerned that moving to the final interim rule is not justified and skips important opportunities for states to provide input and work collaboratively. We understand that our Attorney General's Office will also send a letter detailing these concerns.

We are asking that CEQ rescind the interim final rule and reinstate the NEPA implementing regulations to allow consistent, efficient and thorough analysis of environmental impacts on state and federal projects.

Sincerely,



Casey D. Sixkiller
Director



March 26, 2025

Megan Healy
Principal Deputy Director for the National Environmental Policy Act
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place NW
Washington, DC 20503

Subject: Council on Environmental Quality, Docket No. CEQ-2025-0002, Removal of National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Regulations

Dear Principal Deputy Director Healy:

I am writing to express concerns on behalf of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) about procedural complications and disruptions that could result from removal of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementing regulations under [40 CFR 1500-1508](#), per Docket No. CEQ-2025-0002. WSDOT is responsible for ensuring that Washington State's transportation projects are planned, permitted, and delivered in compliance with NEPA. Clarity, consistency, and predictability around NEPA procedures is therefore critical for timely and cost-effective transportation project delivery, as well as to ensure NEPA compliance for our projects is sound and defensible. The concerns detailed below highlight the potential for uncertainty, inconsistency, and increased complexity around NEPA procedures that pose risks to transportation project delivery.

Removal of CEQ regulations creates risk of disparate procedures by different federal agencies

WSDOT works with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on most WSDOT projects that include a federal nexus. However, FHWA is not the only federal agency to serve as a lead agency on WSDOT projects. WSDOT also works with other U.S. Department of Transportation agencies, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and federal resource agencies depending on the project.

Removal of the CEQ regulations could lead to each federal agency developing disparate procedures and substantive regulations. We appreciate that CEQ has made an effort to address this through its [February 19, 2025 memorandum](#) on federal agency NEPA procedures. That guidance, however, does not provide the basis for a reasonable level of consistency or clarity between federal agencies to administer or revise their NEPA procedures. This could lead to WSDOT having to follow conflicting NEPA procedures, creating uncertainty, project delivery delay, and increasing potential vulnerabilities for legal challenges.

Procedural Concerns

1. **Increased Uncertainty and Administrative Complexity:** The rescission removes the clarity and procedural streamlining that recent NEPA regulations provided, requiring our agency to navigate a more complex and less predictable regulatory framework. Without consistent federal guidance, our ability to efficiently process NEPA documentation, including Environmental Assessments (EAs) and Environmental Impact Statements (EISs), is significantly hindered.
2. **Disruptions to Established Procedures and Potential Legal Risk:** Removal of the CEQ NEPA regulations will create inconsistencies in federal agencies' compliance with the original NEPA statute for project delivery. Federal agencies will no longer have a common NEPA implementing framework on which to base their own agency NEPA regulations, creating greater confusion and disparity between federal agency procedures. For example, projects with two or more federal lead agencies may no longer have similar NEPA documentation direction or be confident in adopting each other's NEPA documentation (particularly for Categorical Exclusions [CEs]), creating greater project delivery inefficiencies.

Projects that require EAs or EISs rely heavily on CEQ's 40 CFR 1500-1508 for documentation processes, including but not limited to structure, public and agency involvement, and timeline. The rescission of these regulations will lead to greater disparity and increased risk.

Transportation projects also require close coordination between federal and state agencies. The rescission could make this interagency collaboration more complex, less predictable, and potentially delay necessary approvals that affect WSDOT's federally funded projects.

WSDOT has developed NEPA compliance processes that align with CEQ regulations. With this rescission, WSDOT will need to revise internal procedures, re-train staff, and re-establish agreements with federal agencies, leading to additional administrative burdens and increased project costs.

The rescission of NEPA streamlining measures creates greater exposure to litigation, as opponents may exploit regulatory uncertainties. This puts WSDOT at risk of extended legal challenges, further delaying essential transportation projects.

3. **Delays in Project Delivery and Increased Costs:** The lack of clear and consistent NEPA regulations will likely result in prolonged review periods and increased costs due to additional environmental analyses, documentation, and legal reviews. This affects WSDOT's ability to meet project timelines and budget constraints, which is particularly concerning given the increasing need for transportation infrastructure improvements. Costly and prolonged environmental review is also contrary to the intent of the federal policy reform as stated in [Executive Order \(EO\) 14154](#) (90 Fed. Reg. 8353, January 29, 2025), promulgated to "expedite and simplify the permitting process."

Given these challenges, we strongly urge CEQ, through the NEPA Implementation Work Group (established through section [5\(c\) of EO 14154](#)) or otherwise, to provide or facilitate clear and specific guidance to states on how to navigate NEPA compliance moving forward. This would further the federal administration's stated goal to streamline and simplify the NEPA process in

part through CEQ guidance. Additionally, we recommend that any future rulemaking efforts prioritize procedural clarity, predictability, and efficiency to ensure that our transportation projects can proceed without unnecessary delays.

We appreciate your attention to these concerns and look forward to working collaboratively to develop solutions that support both environmental stewardship and the timely delivery of transportation infrastructure. Should you require further information or wish to discuss this matter in greater detail, please do not hesitate to contact WSDOT Environmental Services Director, Ahmer Nizam at ahmer.nizam@wsdot.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Julie Meredith, PE
Secretary of Transportation
Washington State Department of Transportation



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mailing Address: PO Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504-3200 · 360 902-2200 · TDD 360 902-2207

Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street, Olympia, WA

March 20, 2025

The Honorable Katherine R. Scarlett
Chief of Staff
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place NW
Washington, DC 20503

RE: Docket Number CEQ-2025-0002, removal of Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) from the Code of Federal Regulations

Dear Ms. Scarlett:

On behalf of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), I am submitting our comments and concerns with the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) retraction of the CEQ regulations implementing the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). This action forces each agency to update or promulgate its own NEPA regulations and as I understand, adopt new regulations that conform with the final 2020 rule. I appreciate your consideration of our concerns.

The State of Washington has long supported NEPA as a bedrock environmental law that is critical to evaluate impacts to the environment. Federal projects subject to NEPA impact a range of social, economic, environmental and cultural interests that must be protected. We have vital interest in ensuring that federal agencies adequately evaluate and disclose potential impacts, especially as it pertains to the environmental consequences of major federal actions. While we do not oppose efforts to improve the NEPA process, we are concerned with the decision to have each federal agency promulgate its own new NEPA rules that rely on the 2020 NEPA rule as guidance. Any changes to NEPA must avoid significant harm to natural resources and endangered species in Washington, as well as preserve the integrity of and public confidence in the NEPA process.

Below, please find a more detailed analysis of how promulgating the 2020 rule across federal agencies would impact the WDFW's work. While we appreciate the need to create an efficient government process, we value a process that entails adequate consultation with states prior to issuing proposed changes. Reducing environmental review without very careful considerations will only weaken the protections essential to the recovery and conservation of Washington's fish and wildlife. We therefore request that this administration embark on a thoughtful approach to NEPA that includes adequate consultation with states and results in regulations that do not put our species at risk.

Particularly concerning aspects of the 2020 rule and their potentially deleterious impact to Washington's fish and wildlife include:

Discontinuing consideration of environmental impacts that are “indirect,” “cumulative,” or “remote in time, geographically remote, or the product of a lengthy causal chain” (85 FR 1708)

This almost certainly eliminates assessment of climate impacts from the NEPA process. However, consideration of climate impacts is essential to understanding the health of Washington's natural resources. Failing to evaluate and account for the impacts of climate change during a NEPA review process will inevitably yield deficient and misleading results and recommendations.

Additionally, cumulative impacts are difficult to identify, manage, and mitigate ahead of time. It is precisely for this reason that the evaluation of “cumulative” impacts that NEPA is so critical. Ignoring cumulative effects during a NEPA process, would preclude consideration of other critical environmental impacts such as land use change, sedimentation and erosion, water quantity and quality, and ecosystem function.

Removing specific direction to consider impacts to listed species

As the state's principal steward of fish and wildlife resources, removing specific direction to consider impacts to listed species directly impedes our mission to preserve, protect, and perpetuate Washington's fish, wildlife, and ecosystems. As federally listed species like Southern

Resident orcas and Columbia Basin pygmy rabbits teeter on the brink of extinction, it is essential to evaluate effects of a project on a protected species. Removing language (§ 1508.27(b)(9)) that specifically directs responsible officials to evaluate the "degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat" greatly undermines that goal.

Shortening the length and timelines of Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements

For State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) compliance, WDFW occasionally adopts an existing NEPA document (EIS, EA, or categorical exclusion (CE)) instead of requiring the applicant to prepare an Environmental Checklist or a new EIS. If such a NEPA document was inadequate or non-existent, a checklist or EIS would be needed to meet SEPA requirements. This could potentially create inefficiencies and extra work for applicants that need both NEPA and SEPA. Requiring agencies to coordinate on scheduling and/or completion of a single environmental document will likely increase the time needed to complete such a document and/or increase costs by requiring more staff time. However, in many cases, WDFW would consider being a cooperating agency with a federal agency in developing environmental documents.

Expanding Categorical Exemptions

Expanding or increasing CEs without proper oversight or consideration of fit of a CE to a project risks not conducting adequate review and not providing the public and other agencies with governmental transparency and the opportunity to review and comment. Many environmental impacts, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative, are permanent and cannot be reversed. Careful

analysis and examination of alternatives can help reduce or mitigate for adverse environmental impacts. With an expanding human population, development, expanding resource needs, and increased competition on natural resource management capacity, it is important to ensure thoughtful development and environmental review. Reducing environmental review and public input will likely increase adverse environmental impacts.

Limiting Supplemental EISs

The proposal suggests that a supplemental EIS would be required only when a major federal action remains to occur. This may not allow transparency in all cases when additional information or changes are needed after the main agency action is complete.

Changing EIS Format

The proposal also includes updates to formats because of electronic preparation and distribution of documents. These appear to be appropriate. However, the inclusion of estimated costs of conducting an environmental review would be hard to determine, and time consuming, with little benefit to the environment. Including the cost of compliance associated with other environmental review and authorization requirements is frequently unforeseeable because EISs can be used several years later for related actions.

We appreciate your consideration. I urge you to embark on a more thoughtful approach to NEPA that does not put environmental protection at risk. If you have any questions, please contact Meagan West or the Director of Governor Ferguson's Washington, D.C. Office, Rose Minor at Rose.Minor@gov.wa.gov.

Thank you,



Kelly Susewind
Director



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PO Box 47890 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7890

Tel: 360-236-4030 • TTY Relay: 800-833-6384

March 27, 2025

Katherine R. Scarlett
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place NW
Washington, DC 20503

RE: Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (CEQ-2025-0002)

Dear Katherine R. Scarlett:

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) offers the following comments in response to the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) proposed rulemaking titled "*Removal of National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Regulations*" published in the Federal Register on February 25, 2025.

DOH is concerned about sweeping changes to the proposed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). DOH supported NEPA as a bedrock environmental law that is critical to protecting the environment and public health. NEPA has provided a roadmap that ensures our government evaluates the full environmental, economic, social, and public health impacts of federal actions. While DOH does not oppose efforts to improve the NEPA process, we are concerned by the lack of information, consultation, and adequate time to understand the impacts of CEQ's proposal, especially given the scope and magnitude of the changes proposed. Further, DOH is concerned that the changes to the NEPA process in this rule could cause significant harm to natural resources, endangered species, and human health in Washington State.

DOH has summarized specific comments below.

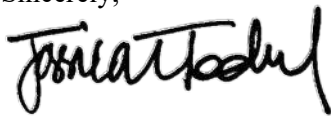
1. NEPA is one of the standard ways that a project is assessed as it impacts vulnerable locations, such as schools, healthcare facilities, and nursing homes. The proposed rule change weakens the ability for agencies and the public to understand the full scope of potential environmental and public health impacts of projects, especially to our most vulnerable residents and natural resources. Of particular importance is the impact of projects on vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, those with disabilities, and those with underlying health conditions that could be exacerbated by environmental harm.
2. NEPA recognizes that projects and proposals can impact the environment, and the people living within that environment, in multiple ways. DOH does not support the elimination of the concept of Environmental Justice in the analysis of impacts. Asking agencies to ignore cumulative impacts is

essentially asking to ignore a key intention of NEPA. This policy may give agencies discretion on when to use NEPA procedures even when they would normally be required. This lack of standardization may lead to greater discrepancies around environmental protections and health outcomes.

3. DOH is concerned by potential overuse of categorical exclusions to streamline NEPA review. The proposal allows larger projects that may have significant impacts to be considered a categorical exclusion if there are mitigating conditions. This proposal could severely limit the rights of the public, states, and federal recognized Tribes to participate in the environmental review process and voice their concerns. This streamlining will likely result in unintended consequences in the form of health impacts and economic loss due to poor planning and lack of public oversight.
4. This rule makes engagement through public comments vague and could allow agencies to determine that public comment may not be required. Public comment is one of the foundations of NEPA and allows residents directly impacted by a project's actions to speak directly to decision-makers. The first statement of the CEQ memo states the intention to "prioritize efficiency and certainty over any other policy objectives." But opening NEPA up to inconsistent implementation across agencies, removing critical information, and reducing public input may lead to more environmental and public health harm. The whole exercise of having a public comment period is moot if this statement is followed, "though CEQ seeks comments to obtain the public's views, such comments could not alter the President's decision." (Section 3, page 10615). Public input in these processes, regarding this rule change, and NEPA more generally, are the cornerstone of democratic values. Ignoring public sentiment and subject matter expertise is at odds with NEPA, and public comment processes.

DOH strongly opposes the proposed changes to NEPA outlined in this rule. Thank you for considering our response to this request for comments. If you have any questions, please contact DOH's Federal and Regulatory Affairs Director, Michael Ellsworth at Michael.Ellsworth@doh.wa.gov or Governor Ferguson's Director of Federal and Inter-State Affairs, Rose Minor at Rose.Minor@gov.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Jessica Todorovich
Interim Secretary of Health
Washington State Department of Health

cc: Michael Ellsworth, Federal & Regulatory Affairs Director, DOH
Lacy Fehrenbach, Chief, Office of Prevention, Safety & Health, DOH
Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, WA State Health Officer, DOH
Rose Minor, Director of Federal & Inter-State Affairs, GOV
Kristin Peterson, Chief, Office of Policy, Planning & Evaluation, DOH
Nate Weed, Chief, Office of Resilience & Health Security, DOH
Meghan Jernigan, Federal Relations Deputy Director, DOH



Allyson Brooks Ph.D., Director
State Historic Preservation Officer

Log; 2025-03-01553

March 17, 2025

Katherine R. Scarlett
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place NW
Washington, DC 20503

RE: Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act

Dear Katherine R. Scarlett:

On behalf of the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, I am submitting our comments and concerns with the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) retraction of the CEQ regulations implementing the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). This action forces each agency to update or promulgate its own NEPA regulations.

Washington has a unique relationship to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as it our Senator, Henry "Scoop" Jackson, who conceived of the legislation and ensured its passage through Congress in the 1960s. We are very proud that it was our Senator who took the initiative to recognize that the federal government should ensure that our citizens and the environment exist in productive harmony and consider the needs of present and future generations of Americans.

The purpose of NEPA in Section 2 states: To declare a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation; and to establish a Council on Environmental Quality.

Section 101 b (4) states: Preserve important historic, cultural and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice.

Section 102(2)(1) makes it perfectly clear that NEPA requires consideration of any worldwide and long-range character of environmental problems. This section ends with the phrase "preventing a decline in the quality of mankind's world environment". This speaks *directly* to the emerging issue of climate change and the impact to humans and the environment. It is an *undeniable* connection. This requires that climate change impacts must be considered in any environmental analysis.

It is also important to remember that in *Calvert Cliffs Coordinating Committee v USAEC*, J. Skelly Wright held that the courts have the power to require agencies to comply with the procedural



directions of NEPA. This means that all the issues surrounding impacts on natural and cultural resources, including climate change, cultural heritage and impacts on communities (humans) must be addressed. Nowhere does the original legislation limit itself to only impacts that were happening in the 20th century.

The proposed guidance may have significant impacts on how federal agencies assess the effects to cultural resources by federal agencies. It is stated clearly in 42 U.S.C § 4331 (1970) that the intent of Congress was to:

“Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice;” and

“Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations”

The guidance that is proposed would negate the direction from Congress to balance development with the protection of our American heritage.

Below is a more detailed analysis of how this rulemaking impacts our agency’s work and our state’s cultural resources. If CEQ through the working group is going to assist agencies in updating their regulation we continue to advocate for a more thoughtful approach to NEPA following the intent of the original Act. Federal agency regulations must include adequate consultation with states and tribes that results in an environmental analysis that does not put cultural resource protection at risk.

1. We want to ensure that any repeal of CEQ’s regulatory definition of “effects and impacts” is replaced in federal agency rules. For cultural resources, indirect effects, such as changes to setting, feeling and association, are potential impacts that will cause a property to lose its historic significance. While this may not rise to the level of a full Environmental Impact Statement it should be considered worthy enough of an Environmental Assessment and mitigation procedures.

The construction of the Alaskan Way tunnel in Seattle is an example of why analyzing an indirect effect, such as vibration, is critical. The study of potential vibration impacts from tunneling led to the realization that the historic buildings in Pioneer Square required LIDAR documentation and monitoring to record potential movement and structural changes. The analysis resulted in having FHWA/WSDOT develop monitoring measures to detect when the tunneling vibrations were having adverse effects to the materials, workmanship and structural integrity of the historic buildings above. The loss of this type of analysis, in which an indirect effect could result in a direct consequence, will lead to the damage and destruction of cultural resources.



2. We are **concerned** by any agency potential overuse of categorical exclusions to streamline NEPA review. The proposal allows larger projects that may have significant impacts to be considered a categorical exclusion if there are mitigating conditions. This proposal could severely limit the rights of the public, states and federal recognized tribes to participate in the environmental review process and voice their concerns.
3. We are concerned with any agency clarification that effects should not be considered significant if they are remote in time, geographically remote, or the result of a lengthy causal chain. As seen in Washington State, major infrastructure projects are licensed or permitted for 50 years or more. The entire Columbia and Snake River Hydro system is a relevant example. The Hanford Nuclear Facility and the remediation of nuclear waste is the prime example in Washington State for a temporal scale. Projects such as the Hanford remediation and hydro facilities, which can continue for half a century or more, have direct and indirect effects to archaeological sites, historic buildings and tribal traditional cultural places.
4. We want to ensure that agency rules make it clear that mitigation must have a nexus to the effects of the proposed action, is limited to those actions that have an effect on the environment and does not include actions that do not have an effect on the environment. Compensatory mitigation has worked well for impacts to cultural resources when there aren't direct mitigation options. This is particularly true for culturally significant properties where archaeological data recovery or other forms of documentation are not sufficient mitigation for the loss or alteration of the resource.
5. We want to ensure that agencies add "Tribal" to the phrase "State and local" throughout any proposed rule to ensure consultation with Tribal entities. It reflects the existing NEPA practice to coordinate or consult with affected Tribal governments and agencies, as necessary and appropriate for a proposed action. It is a critical modification necessary to fully recognize and support Tribal sovereignty and participation in the review of all federal agency actions. This is particularly important given the tribes' unique traditional cultural and ecological knowledge.
6. We remain supportive of any agency rule that replaces "circulate" or "circulation" with "publish" or "publication" throughout the rule and make "publish" a defined term that provides agencies with the flexibility to make environmental review and information available to the public by electronic means. However, the caveat is that the documents must still be available for those who do not have digital access.

Historically, the practice of circulation included the mailing of hard copies or providing electronic copies on disks or CDs. There should be a minimum requirement to provide a hard copy or copy of physical media in limited circumstances, and hard copies should be placed in local libraries to ensure access by the public with limited or no internet access. However, we are supportive of the acknowledgement of digital delivery of NEPA documents. This will



reduce paperwork and delays and modernize the NEPA process to be more accessible to the public.

7. We remain **strongly opposed** to any elimination of the consideration of the concept of Environmental Justice in the analysis of impacts and believe that intent still exists in law. American heritage and cultural sites encompass all of America's diverse history and locations. Incorporating Environmental Justice is critical to assure all American's regardless of race, color, national origin or income are entitled to the same environmental protection of their historic and cultural sites during the analysis of proposed project impacts. Historically, many significant archaeological, historic or cultural sites were destroyed without benefit of a full and informed consultation with the descendent community. It is clear in the original legislation that impacts on communities and people were to be considered particularly when one group is having a disproportionally high and adverse effect on certain populations. The removal of the E.O. 12898 does not remove the responsibility of the human impact under environmental review. The words "Environmental Justice" do not need to be in place in order for the same level of analysis.

We appreciate your consideration. Again, I urge you to embark on a more thoughtful approach to NEPA that does not put cultural resource and environmental protection at risk. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Allyson Brooks or the Director of Governor Ferguson's Washington, D.C. Office, Rose Minor at Rose.Minor@gov.wa.gov. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Allyson Brooks, Ph.D.
State Historic Preservation Officer

cc: Rose Minor, Governor Ferguson Federal policy, Washington DC - Rose.Minor@gov.wa.gov



March 26, 2025

The Honorable Katherine R. Scarlett
Chief of Staff
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place NW
Washington, DC 20503

RE: Docket Number CEQ-2025-0002, removal of Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) from the Code of Federal Regulations

Dear Ms. Scarlett:

On behalf of the Puget Sound Partnership, I write to express our deep concern with the proposed rule to remove the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) from the Code of Federal Regulations. We urge you to withdraw this flawed rule.

Our state has long supported NEPA as a bedrock environmental law critical to protecting the environment and public health since its inception in the 1960s. While the Puget Sound Partnership does not oppose efforts to improve the NEPA process, we are concerned by the lack of information, consultation, and adequate time to understand the impacts of this proposal, especially given the scope and magnitude of the changes proposed. Indeed, though the memo accompanying this proposed rule change describes an intention to "expedite and simplify the permitting process," the practical effect will be precisely the opposite. Without uniform, reliable NEPA regulations applicable across the federal government, each individual agency will be obligated to promulgate its own procedures. This approach risks creating delays and uncertainty for projects subject to NEPA review, which may now face a patchwork of different processes from one agency to another. The resulting chaos will jeopardize the integrity of – and public confidence in – the NEPA process.

I am further concerned that "CEQ encourages agencies to use the final 2020 rule "Update to the Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act" as an initial framework for the development of revisions to their NEPA

implementing.” As we noted at the time, the 2020 rule could cause significant harm to natural resources, endangered species and human health in Washington state—outcomes completely contrary to the intent of the text of NEPA.

Below, please find a more detailed analysis of how the 2020 rule – which CEQ now encourages agencies to use as a framework for their individual NEPA procedures – would adversely impact our agency’s work. If CEQ wishes to truly improve the NEPA process, I encourage you to abandon this effort and instead embark on a more thoughtful approach to NEPA that includes adequate consultation with states and results in regulations that do not put environmental protection at risk.

Particularly concerning aspects of the 2020 rule – and their potentially deleterious impact to our ability to meet our statutory mission of accelerating our region’s collective effort to restore and protect Puget Sound – include:

Discontinuing consideration of environmental impacts that are “indirect,” “cumulative,” or “remote in time, geographically remote, or the product of a lengthy causal chain”

This almost certainly eliminates assessment of climate impacts from the NEPA process. However, consideration of climate impacts is essential to understanding the health of Puget Sound. Each of the State’s statutory (RCW 90.71.300) Puget Sound recovery goals (Healthy Human Population, Vibrant Human Quality of Life, Thriving Species and Food Web, Protected and Restored Habitat, Abundant Water, and Healthy Water Quality) are threatened by climate change impacts.

Of the 25 Puget Sound Vital Signs – measures of ecosystem health that guide the assessment of progress toward Puget Sound recovery goals – 19 are at high risk from climate change. Failing to evaluate and account for the impacts of climate change during a NEPA review process will inevitably yield deficient and misleading results and recommendations.

Cumulative impacts are difficult to identify, manage, and mitigate ahead of time. It is precisely for this reason that the evaluation of “cumulative” impacts that NEPA is so critical—especially for ecosystems like Puget Sound facing a “death from a thousand cuts.” Ignoring cumulative effects during a NEPA process, would preclude consideration of other critical environmental impacts relevant to Puget Sound recovery such as land use change, sedimentation and erosion, water quantity and quality, and ecosystem function.

For example, a project that installs a small amount of shoreline armoring may not significantly impair beach formation and nearshore habitat function by itself. However, dozens of “small” armoring projects could cumulatively do significant damage to the nearshore environment. Likewise, a project that clears and develops a small amount of previously intact riparian habitat may not, by itself, significantly increase stream temperatures. But again, dozens of such projects along the same stream reach will invariably raise stream temperatures significantly, to the detriment of endangered salmonids. These are precisely the type of environmental impacts that a comprehensive NEPA process should concern itself with.

Removing specific direction to consider impacts to listed species

As biophysical systems approach precarious tipping points and federally listed species like Southern Resident Killer Whales and Chinook salmon teeter on the brink of extinction, it is critical to evaluate effects of a project on iconic and protected species. Stripping language that specifically directs responsible officials to evaluate the “degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat” undermines that goal.

Allowing private project applicants to prepare their own impact statements

Impact statements prepared by private parties – especially those with a financial interest in the outcome of the project – compromise the scientific objectivity of the NEPA process and invite real and perceived bias into reports and recommendations that affect Puget Sound.

Restricting public input by burdening citizens with difficult-to-meet commenting standards

Prescriptions directing commenters to “include or describe the data sources and methodologies supporting the proposed changes” creates barriers to citizens who wish to weigh in on draft reports and recommendations but may not have the time or expertise necessary to describe the research methodologies informing their perspectives. Recommendations like this are exclusionary and erode public confidence in the outcome of assessments.

Ultimately (and as the original text of the law makes clear), the purpose of the NEPA process should be to comprehensively and uniformly assess environmental impacts of projects before they happen in order to provide policymakers, regulators, and the general public with the data and analysis needed to make informed decisions. CEQ’s proposed actions do not serve this purpose.

We appreciate your consideration. Again, I urge you to abandon this rule and embark on a more thoughtful approach to NEPA that does not put environmental protection at risk. If you have any questions, please contact the Special Projects Assistant for the Puget Sound Partnership, Ahren Stroming, at Ahren.Stroming@psp.wa.gov or the Director of Governor Ferguson's Washington, D.C. Office, Rose Minor, at Rose.Minor@gov.wa.gov. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Larry Epstein
Deputy Director



**STATE OF WASHINGTON
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE**

March 26, 2025

The Honorable Katherine R. Scarlett
Chief of Staff
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place NW
Washington, DC 20503

RE: Docket Number CEQ-2025-0002, removal of Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) from the Code of Federal Regulations

Dear Ms. Scarlett:

On behalf of the State of Washington Recreation and Conservation Office, I write to express our concern with the proposed rule to remove the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) from the Code of Federal Regulations. We urge you to withdraw this proposed rule.

The Recreation and Conservation Office provides statewide leadership and funding to protect and improve Washington's natural and outdoor recreation resources including the recovery of threatened and endangered salmon. Our state has long supported NEPA as a foundational environmental law critical to protecting the environment and public health since its inception. While we do not oppose efforts to improve the NEPA process, the lack of consultation and adequate time to understand the impacts of this proposal is concerning, especially given the scope and magnitude of the proposed changes.

The removal of CEQ's role and the current implementing regulations will reduce federal agency consistency and coordination and will weaken environmental protections. The CEQ currently manages coordination and helps to determine a "lead agency in NEPA review processes." In the absence of clear federal leadership and coordination, states and partners will be left to manage conflicting priorities or processes across numerous federal agencies. This will lead to inefficiencies and inconsistencies that will increase the cost and time of review and degrade the integrity of the environmental review.

Of additional concern is that the proposed rule encourages agencies to revert to the final 2020 rule "Update to the Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act" as an initial framework for the development of revisions to their NEPA implementing regulations." As noted in a previous letter dated March 9, 2020, the 2020 rule could cause significant harm to natural resources, endangered species and human health in



Washington state—outcomes contrary to the intent of NEPA as stated in the law under section 2 “...encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment...”

Below are some specific examples of how reverting to the 2020 rule would adversely impact the agency’s work and impact threatened and endangered species recovery:

Removing specific direction to consider impacts to listed species

Washington State has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to recover salmon and steelhead that are listed as either threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). The success of these investments relies on the state’s ability to evaluate and understand the impacts of ongoing activities. It is critical to evaluate the effects of a project on ESA listed species. Replacing language (§ 1508.27(b)(9)) that specifically directs responsible officials to evaluate the “degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat” undermines the ability to do so.

Repealing consideration of environmental impacts that are “indirect” or “cumulative”

Repealing the term “cumulative” from NEPA implementing regulations removes language that provides clarity around “effects or impacts” as defined in NEPA. Disregarding cumulative effects during a NEPA process will weaken environmental protection, is inconsistent with intent of NEPA, and would preclude consideration of other critical environmental impacts. These include indirect and cumulative impacts to habitat, water quantity and quality, and ecosystem function critical to the recovery of ESA-listed salmon and orca.

I appreciate your consideration. Please abandon this proposed rule and embark on a more coordinated approach to NEPA that includes adequate consultation with states and results in regulations that do not put long-standing Congressionally authorized environmental protections at risk.

If you have any questions, please contact Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office Director Erik Neatherlin at Erik.Neatherlin@gsro.wa.gov or the Director of Governor Ferguson’s Washington, D.C. Office Rose Minor at Rose.Minor@gov.wa.gov. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Megan Duffy
Director

Attachment C

Salmon Projects Completed and Closed from February 3, 2025-May 1, 2025

Project Number	Sponsor	Project Name	Primary Program	Closed Completed Date
18-1484	Swinomish Indian Tribal Community	IMW - Smokehouse Tidal Marsh Preliminary Design	Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration - Projects	03/07/2025
19-1346	South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group	Lower Horn Creek Fish Passage	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	04/18/2025
19-1427	Kittitas County Conservation District	The Ranch on Swauk Creek	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	04/16/2025
19-1721	Kittitas County Conservation District	Yakima Fish Passage Targeted Investment Projects	Salmon State Projects	02/18/2025
20-1045	Pomeroy Conservation District	Alpowa PALS Phase III Restoration	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	02/06/2025
20-1080	Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group	Baird Creek Liberation - Splash Dam Removal	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	02/21/2025

Project Number	Sponsor	Project Name	Primary Program	Closed Completed Date
<u>20-1082</u>	Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group	SF Toutle at Johnson Creek Riparian Restoration	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	03/07/2025
<u>20-1090</u>	South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group	Skookum Creek RM 6.5 Restoration	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	04/17/2025
<u>20-1150</u>	Lummi Nation	South Fork Upper and Lower Fobes Ph 2 Restoration	Salmon State Projects	02/14/2025
<u>20-1368</u>	Skagit County	Lower Day Slough Final Design and Construction	Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration - Projects	04/03/2025
<u>20-1390</u>	Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group	West-Middle Fork Teanaway Instream Wood Design II	Salmon State Projects	04/28/2025
<u>20-1391</u>	Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group	2020 Yakima Basin Riparian Stewardship	Salmon State Projects	02/07/2025
<u>20-1447</u>	Cascade Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group	Merritt Oxbow Reconnection Restoration	Salmon State Projects	03/06/2025
<u>21-1123</u>	Department of Natural Resources	Kennedy Creek Natural Area Preserve Acquisition	Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration - Projects	03/17/2025
<u>21-1173</u>	Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation	Sugar Reach Restoration Preliminary Design	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	03/06/2025
<u>21-1197</u>	Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group	Lower Cowlitz Floodplain Restoration	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	02/07/2025

Project Number	Sponsor	Project Name	Primary Program	Closed Completed Date
<u>21-1209</u>	North Yakima Conservation District	Wenas Creek Passage & Screening Prelim Des	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	03/18/2025
<u>21-1241</u>	Columbia Land Trust	Upper Rattlesnake Creek Conservation	Salmon State Projects	02/10/2025
<u>21-1382</u>	Seattle City Light	Skagit Watershed Habitat Acquisition V(b)	Salmon State Projects	04/01/2025
<u>22-1003</u>	Palouse Conservation District	Steptoe Creek Culvert 2 Replacement	Salmon Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Projects	02/06/2025
<u>22-1004</u>	Palouse Conservation District	Steptoe Creek PALS Phase II	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	02/07/2025
<u>22-1016</u>	Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation	Túuši Wána Design Project Touchet River RM 14	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	04/02/2025
<u>22-1018</u>	Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation	McNary National Wildlife Refuge Design	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	02/28/2025
<u>22-1040</u>	Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force	Camp Cr at Schafer Boom Rd Fish Barrier Correction	Salmon State Supplemental Small	03/19/2025
<u>22-1048</u>	Quinault Indian Nation	Lower Quinault Invasive Plant Control (Phase 9)	Salmon State Projects	04/07/2025
<u>22-1093</u>	Mason County Conservation District	Skokomish SF LWD Phase 6 Design	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	04/08/2025

Project Number	Sponsor	Project Name	Primary Program	Closed Completed Date
<u>22-1132</u>	Trout Unlimited Inc.	Coal Creek Fish Passage Restoration	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	03/19/2025
<u>22-1223</u>	Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group	Union River Fish In Fish Out Program 2022-24	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	04/03/2025
<u>22-1502</u>	Chelan County Natural Resources Department	Entiat 4.6 (1D Reach) Prel. Design	Salmon Federal Projects - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund	04/16/2025
<u>22-1570</u>	Pacific Conservation District	Middle Nemah River Phase 3 Design	Salmon State Supplemental Small	04/23/2025
<u>22-1614</u>	Trout Unlimited Inc.	Swauk Cr Supplemental Flows P&C Des	Salmon State Projects	04/15/2025
<u>22-1803</u>	US Fish & Wildlife Service	Willapa Coastal Forest – Phase I	Salmon State Supplemental Large	02/05/2025
<u>23-1275</u>	Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation	Chewuch Acquisition RM 2.8-3.1	Salmon State Supplemental Small	04/02/2025
<u>23-1282</u>	Chelan County Natural Resources Department	Upper Wenatchee Floodplain Reconnection (RM37-38)	Salmon Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Projects	04/17/2025
<u>23-1283</u>	Chelan County Natural Resources Department	Floodplain Restoration Effectiveness Monitoring	Salmon Federal Activities - Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund	02/24/2025

Attachment D: Project Amendments approved by RCO Director

Project Amendments Approved by the RCO Director

Project Number	Project Name	Sponsor	Program	Type	Date	Amendment Descriptions
20-1102	White River LB RM 2.5-4.2	City of Sumner	PSAR Large Capital Projects	Cost Change	02/24/2025	\$2,636,035 of older Puget Sound Partnership Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration returned funds will be added to the grant award.

22-1063	Port Susan Bay Restoration for Resiliency 2022	The Nature Conservancy	PSAR Large Capital Projects	Cost Change	02/24/2025	After attending the site visit to see the restoration work accomplished at Port Susan Bay Preserve and learn more about the associated stewardship needs, Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program approved adding the \$346,284 fiscal year 21-23 Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program funds returned from the 20-1392 Port Susan Bay Restoration for Resiliency to this 22-1063 Port Susan Bay Restoration for Resiliency 2022 to support ongoing project stewardship. Required match is \$148,408, which is met and exceeded by the \$245,901.64 Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Large Cap funding reimbursed for direct Construction and administrative costs in billing #1. Special Conditions are updated to
-------------------------	--	------------------------	-----------------------------	-------------	------------	--

Project Number	Project Name	Sponsor	Program	Type	Date	Amendment Descriptions
						reflect that indirect costs are not eligible for Estuary and Slamon Recovery Program reimbursement but can be reimbursed with Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration funding that is not used to match Estuary and Slamon Recovery Program.

Project Number	Project Name	Sponsor	Program	Type	Date	Amendment Descriptions
22-1076	Wind River Double Bend Conservation	Columbia Land Trust	Salmon Federal Projects	Cost Change	03/31/2025	Requesting an increase in A&E from 5 percent to 10 percent. The project acquired two properties at a very low price. While the purchase price is low, the administrative cost is independent of land value and remains similar to the cost of acquiring a higher priced property. Since the project cost and grant award were low, the sponsor did not have enough administrative funds to cover the admin of the project.

Project Number	Project Name	Sponsor	Program	Type	Date	Amendment Descriptions
22-1084	Johnson Ck Triple Culvert Restoration 2022	North Olympic Salmon Coalition	Salmon State Projects	Cost Change	04/22/2025	This amendment is to correct the match amount that should have been reduced with cost change amendment 3 because the addition of those Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration funds supplanted the sponsor share. The match is reduced to \$72,090.
22-1165	Boise Creek at Enumclaw Golf Course_Construction	City of Enumclaw	Salmon State Projects	Cost Change	04/07/2025	De-obligating \$590,171 in 23-25 Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration funds to return to lead entity control, as requested by sponsor. And reducing match to \$358,000 (amount of sponsor match before Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration funds were added to project).

22-1467	IMW Milltown Island Phase 2 Construction	Department of Fish and Wildlife	PSAR Large Capital Projects	Cost Change	03/31/2025	To ease grant administration, the Project Agreement Award amount is increased by \$350,917 of fiscal year 21-23 Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program funds that were returned from project 20-1934, Milltown Island Construction Phase 2, which had an overlapping scope. (See Amendment #1 to project 20-1934 for additional detail.) The required match for the fiscal year 21-23 Estuary and Salmon Recovery Program award amount is \$150,394. The Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Large Capital Project funds in this Project Agreement meet and exceeded the Estuary and Salmon Recovery Program match requirements; the total Agreement amount is increased to \$5,237,917.
22-1492	Peshastin RM 3.2-3.8	Chelan County	Salmon	Cost	03/20/2025	Adding 15 percent match

Project Number	Project Name	Sponsor	Program	Type	Date	Amendment Descriptions
	Design	Natural Resources Department	Federal Projects	Change		to project in the amount of \$23,824. The approved time extension requires 15 percent match.
23-1023	Asotin Creek PA 3.2 Restoration	Asotin County Conservation District	Salmon Federal Projects	Cost Change	02/03/2025	Merging award #24-1115 into existing project #23-1023. This amendment adds \$195,000 in board and \$37,000 in Bonneville Power Administration match. This amendment increases the instream and planting scope while adding invasive species removal/control to the scope.

Project Number	Project Name	Sponsor	Program	Type	Date	Amendment Descriptions
23-1075	Trafton Floodplain Restoration (Ph I)	Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians	Salmon State Projects	Cost Change	03/13/2025	Per the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's Pacific Salmon Treaty Southern Resident Killer Whale Habitat Subaward allocations, this amendment increases the project funding by \$1,150,298 of 2024 Pacific Salmon Treaty Orca Habitat funding (NA24NMF438G0063-T1-01) bringing the total Orca funding to \$6,071,780 and the total Project Agreement amount to \$6,938,448, and the special conditions are updated to reflect the additional increment of funding. The Stillaguamish Tribe secured funding sufficient to construct the entire project, and the Project Description is updated accordingly.

Project Number	Project Name	Sponsor	Program	Type	Date	Amendment Descriptions
23-1112	Spencer Island Estuary Restoration Project Final D	Department of Fish and Wildlife	Salmon State Projects	Cost Change	04/21/2025	To ease grant administration, the Project Agreement Award amount is increased by \$500,000 of Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program Climate Commitment Act funding awarded to project 22-1130 "Spencer Island Estuary Restoration Design" which is identical in scope to this active agreement. Sponsor match is reduced from \$95,000 to \$10,000 for a new project total of \$1,010,000.

Project Number	Project Name	Sponsor	Program	Type	Date	Amendment Descriptions
						<p>The board and Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration grant funding and sponsor match in this Project Agreement meet and exceed the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program match requirements. Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program funding meets and exceeds the board and Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration match requirements.</p> <p>Special Condition titled "CLIMATE COMMITMENT ACT FUNDING" is added to reflect the terms and conditions of the Climate Commitment Act funding. Special Condition titled "RCO PREPAYMENT TO FEDERAL PARTNER" is added.</p>

Project Number	Project Name	Sponsor	Program	Type	Date	Amendment Descriptions
23-1120	Helen Sherry Floodplain Acquisition	Seattle Public Utilities	Salmon Federal Projects	Cost Change	04/24/2025	Reducing match to 15 percent required by board programs. New match amount of \$70,588.
23-1263	Goat Creek Fan Restoration Final	Cascade Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group	Salmon Federal Projects	Cost Change	03/06/2025	Add \$12,000 of board cost increase funds for additional cultural resources work based on trail reroute and additional excavation of existing high-flow channels. Sponsor asked the cultural resources contractor to reduce costs where possible which resulted in a small reduction in their quote.

Project Number	Project Name	Sponsor	Program	Type	Date	Amendment Descriptions
24-1743	Skagit Watershed Habitat Acquisitin 2024 SCL	Seattle City Light	Salmon State Projects	Cost Change	02/03/2025	Adding in \$1,000,000 of Puget Sound Partnership Rapid Response Fund (RRF). No match is required; it is a loan. The RRF will go toward purchase of Child's Creek property and was approved by the lead entity committees, lead entity committees, and the RCO Director.

Item 10: Intensively Monitored Watersheds: A Path Forward

Summary

This memo provides a recommendation from the Science Advisory Panel and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board's Monitoring Subcommittee for future funding of Intensively Monitored Watersheds (IMWs). The recommendation represents a balance between maintaining study integrity and partnerships and providing funding for other monitoring priorities across the state.

Action Requested: Decision

Background

The Intensively Monitored Watershed (IMW) program has been funded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board since June 2003 to evaluate the success of habitat restoration in increasing salmon production. The IMW program goals are to:

1. Determine whether freshwater habitat restoration can effect a change in production of outmigrant salmon and steelhead trout;
2. Determine what features or processes influenced by the habitat improvements caused the increased production or lack thereof;
3. Determine whether the beneficial effects of habitat improvement are maintained over time.

The board provides approximately \$1.5 million of the \$2.35 million monitoring funding received from the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund to implement IMW studies. This funding supports four IMW complexes: Lower Columbia, Hood Canal, Strait of Juan de Fuca, and Skagit River Estuary. The board relies heavily on the knowledge and support of Tribal, federal, and state partners to implement these studies and recognizes the importance of these long-standing partnerships for success.

Over the past year, the board considered the implications of the following two options for each IMW that were developed through close coordination and collaboration with

Tribal partners, IMW researchers and policy-level leadership, the Science Advisory Panel, and the board monitoring subcommittee:

Option 1- Continue IMW monitoring program implementation without change.

Option 2- Modify fish and/or habitat monitoring based on results to date. Determine remaining data and information needs without significantly compromising the integrity of the IMW study.

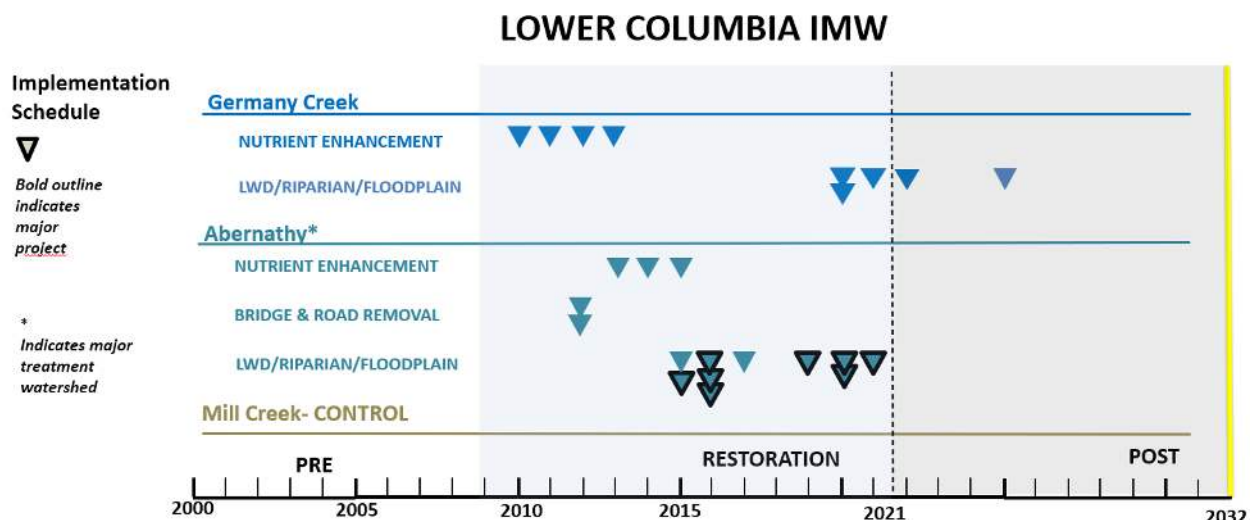
Since December, staff have engaged in conversations with partners and researchers to better understand: 1) the original questions posed by the board and detailed in the study plan; 2) the history of the IMW watersheds in terms of restoration implemented and results of the monitoring to date; and 3) the need for continued monitoring to achieve the intended objectives. This improved understanding and discussion resulted in the following recommendations from the board's Science Advisory Panel and the Monitoring Subcommittee.

Outcomes and Recommendations

The Science Advisory Panel and Monitoring Subcommittee believe that the proposed timelines and recommendations below are an appropriate path for the IMW studies over a timeframe that honors board IMW study investments, partnerships, and learning opportunities, while also providing adequate monitoring funding for emerging priorities within the regions and across the state. The dates below reflect the timeline for funding. Depending on the specific IMW and study element, there may be an additional one to two years of analyses after data collection to complete analyses and prepare final reports and publications. This work will be completed using Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Funding monitoring funding allocated by the board annually (see Attachment A for budgets for Option 1 and 2).

Lower Columbia IMW

Summary of the Study:



- Treatment watersheds: Abernathy (primary), Germany, and Mill (reference) creeks
- Species: Coho (primary), chum, steelhead, and Chinook
- Restoration: Restoration actions (nutrients, large wood, floodplain, riparian, and bridge/roads) occurred between 2011-2021, although restoration work continues in Germany Creek through 2025. Thirty percent of available habitat restored in Abernathy.
- Principle Investigator(s): Fish- Marisa Litz and Jamie Lamperth Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Habitat- Kirk Krueger, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Funding Partners: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Options Considered:

Option 1: End funding for Lower Columbia IMW in 2032

Continue fish and habitat monitoring in all three watersheds until 2032. There would be no change in the methodology or approach under this option.

Option 2 (Recommended): End funding for Lower Columbia IMW study in 2032

End funding for fish monitoring for smolt and adult monitoring in 2032. End funding for habitat monitoring in 2025. Analysis and reporting will be completed within the contract periods.

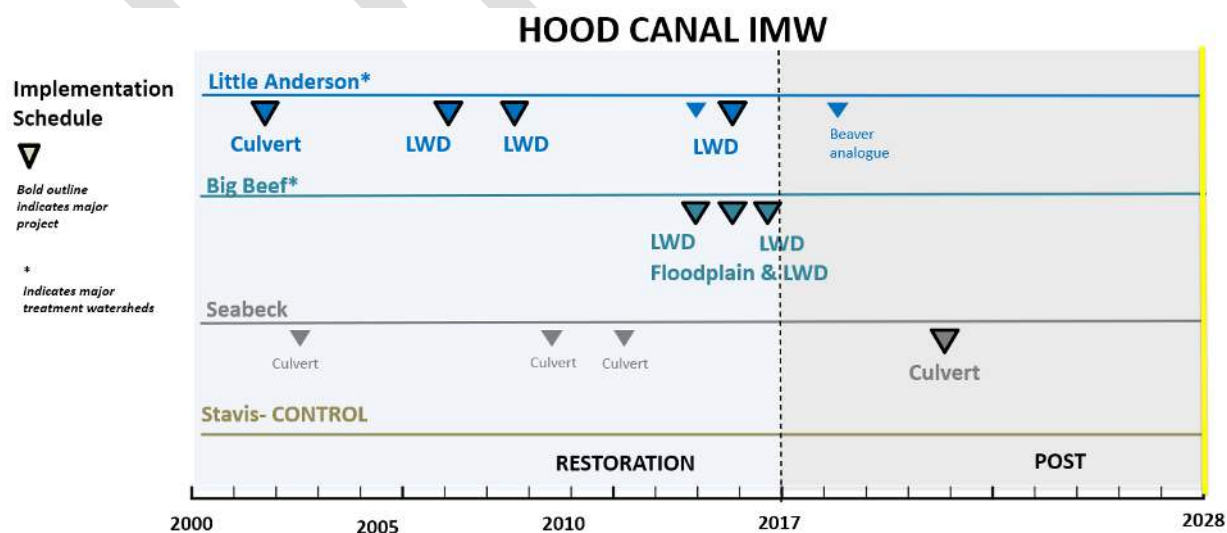
Rationale for Recommendation (Option 2):

Fish Monitoring – The Lower Columbia IMW has one of the strongest fish response to restoration recorded among IMWs. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has detected on average a 23 percent increase in juvenile abundance to date as a result of the restoration completed between 2015-2022. A power analysis indicates they will not have the statistical power to say that this response is significant if the board ends fish monitoring before 2032 ([Zimmerman et al. 2015](#)). The recommendation is to continue monitoring through 2032 in the IMW. During the remaining years of the IMW, the goal will be to complete the ten-year dataset of post-project fish monitoring in the key treatment watershed (Abernathy Creek) and in the control watershed (Mill Creek) for comparison.

Habitat Monitoring – The recommended option ends funding for habitat monitoring in all watersheds by December 2025, based on the conclusion that there will be adequate data to meet the study goals related to causal mechanisms and watershed-scale response to restoration. The final year of habitat data collection in Lower Columbia IMW will be 2025. Final steps will involve 1) completion of data collection under the existing approach, and 2) data compilation and analysis to complete an evaluation of restoration effectiveness at different scales and an exploration of fish-habitat relationships. To complete habitat data analysis, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife requires an additional \$50,000 in their contract. Staff propose to use unobligated 2024 Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund funds to complete habitat analysis.

Hood Canal IMW

Summary of the Study:



- Sites: Little Anderson (primary), Big Beef (primary), Seabeck, Stavis (reference) creeks
- Species: Coho
- Restoration: Restoration actions (large wood, floodplain, and culverts) occurred primarily between 2005-2017. Two culvert projects were recently completed in Seabeck Creek in 2021 and Little Anderson Creek in 2024.
- Principle Researchers(s): Fish- Joe Anderson, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Habitat- Kirk Krueger, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Funding Partners: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Options:

Option 1: End funding for Hood Canal IMW Study in 2032

Continue funding for fish and habitat monitoring in all four watersheds until 2032. There would be no change in the methodology or approach under this option.

Option 2 (Recommended): End funding for Hood Canal IMW Study in 2028

End funding for fish monitoring for smolt and adult monitoring in 2028. End funding for habitat monitoring in 2024. Analysis and reporting will be completed within the contract periods.

Rationale for Recommendation (Option 2):

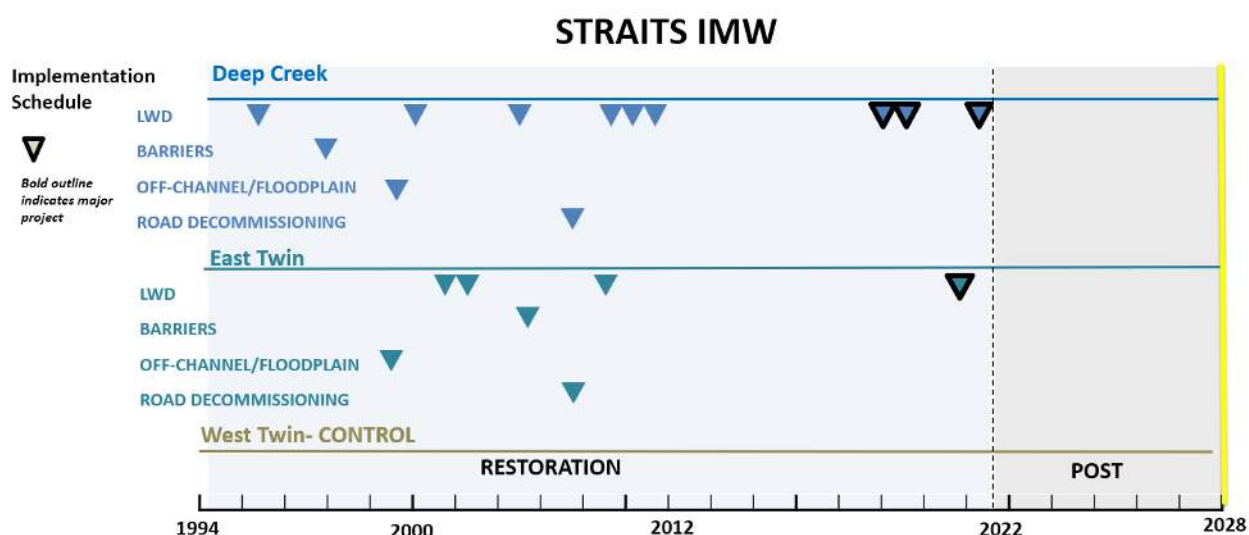
Fish Monitoring – A power analysis indicated that twelve years of post-restoration monitoring would be needed to detect a 30-45 percent increase in coho smolt abundance in the Hood Canal watersheds ([Anderson et al. 2015](#)). To date, there has been a notable increase in coho smolt abundance in Little Anderson Creek, but this response has not been sustained over time. There has not been a detectable increase in smolt abundance in Big Beef Creek where spawner abundance is currently the primary factor that limits smolt abundance (as a result of out-of-basin factors). Continued fish monitoring for ten years post restoration is, however, recommended in Big Beef Creek because restoration was substantial and the preliminary life-stage analyses indicate that parr-to-smolt survival may be increasing. The goal is to have more certainty to say whether this response to restoration is significant and sustained over time (or not). During the remaining years of the IMW, the goal will be to add additional years of post-project monitoring for restoration in the treatment watersheds (Little Anderson, Seabeck, and Big Beef Creek) as well as in the control watershed (Stavis Creek) for comparison. Analysis and reporting will be completed within the contract periods.

Habitat Monitoring – The recommended option ends funding for habitat monitoring in all watersheds by December 2025 based on the conclusion that there will be adequate data to meet the study goals related to causal mechanisms and watershed-scale

response to restoration. The final year of habitat data collection in Hood Canal IMW will be 2024 because there is inadequate funding for a field season in 2025. Final steps will involve 1) completion of data collection under the existing approach, and 2) data compilation and analysis to complete an evaluation of restoration effectiveness at different scales and an exploration of fish-habitat relationships. Analysis and reporting will be completed within the contract periods. See the note above about additional funding needs for habitat analysis.

Straits of Juan de Fuca IMW

Summary of Study:



- Sites: Deep Creek (primary), East Twin River (primary), West Twin River (reference)
- Species: Coho and steelhead (both primary)
- Restoration: Restoration actions (primarily large wood placement) occurred in two main efforts - 2000-2012 and 2019-2022.
- Principle Investigator(s): Fish- Mike McHenry, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, and George Pess, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association Fisheries, Habitat- Maddie Nolan & Kirk Krueger, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Funding Partners: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association & Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe

Options:

Option 1: End funding for Straits IMW study in 2032

Continue funding for fish and habitat monitoring in all four watersheds until 2032. There would be no change in the methodology or approach under this option.

Option 2 (Recommended): End funding for Straits IMW study in 2028

End funding for fish monitoring for smolt, juvenile, and adult monitoring in 2028. End funding for habitat monitoring in 2024. Analysis and reporting will be completed within the contract periods.

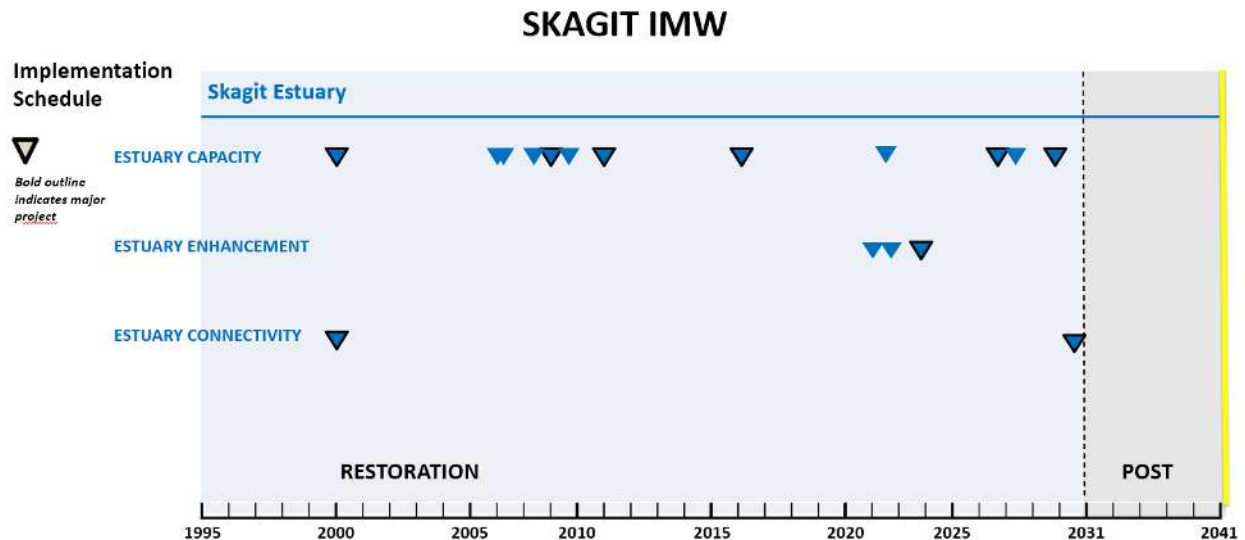
Rationale for Recommendation (Option 2):

Fish Monitoring – Almost fifteen years have passed since the initial restoration effort in the Straits IMW. Data collection from these original treatments helped us learn about the fish and habitat response to restoration in treatment watersheds. A secondary treatment in 2019-2022 added to that understanding with the opportunity to further evaluate additional restoration efforts in East Twin and Deep Creeks. The Science Panel and principal investigators believe that IMW data collection after 2028 would not add substantially to our understanding of restoration benefits or the Straits watersheds. During the remaining years of the IMW, the goal is to add additional years of data to the post project monitoring for the 2019-2022 restoration effort in the treatment watersheds (Deep and East Twin Creeks) and in the control watershed (West Twin) for comparison. The information will inform questions about the persistence of treatments and added response from the more recent treatments.

Habitat Monitoring – The recommended option ends funding for habitat monitoring in all IMW watersheds by December 2025, based on the conclusion that there will be adequate data to meet the study goals related to causal mechanisms and watershed-scale response to restoration. The final year of habitat data collection in the Straits IMW was 2024 because there is inadequate funding for a field season in 2025. Final steps will involve 1) completion of data collection under the existing approach, and 2) data compilation and analysis to complete an evaluation of restoration effectiveness at different scales and an exploration of fish-habitat relationships. Analysis and reporting will be completed within the contract periods. See note above about additional funding needs for habitat analysis.

Skagit IMW

Summary of the Study:



- Treatment watershed: Skagit estuary
- Species: Chinook
- Restoration: Restoration actions (estuary connectivity and capacity) have been ongoing since 2000. Work is expected to continue in the estuary with a large effort planned over the next six years.
- Principle Investigator(s): Mike LeMoine, Skagit River System Cooperative, Correigh Greene, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Fisheries, and Joe Anderson, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Funding Partners: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Skagit River System Cooperative

Options:

Option 1 (Recommended): End funding for IMW Study in 2041

Continue fish and habitat monitoring in the Skagit IMW until 2041. There would be no change in the funding, methodology, or approach under this option.

Option 2: No other option being proposed.

There were substantive discussions with researchers, partners, and Tribes about potential changes to the sampling timeline and design, but a second option was not viable because reducing funding would compromise the study at this point. There was

broad agreement not to pursue a second option for scaling back funding and effort in the Skagit IMW and broad support for continuing this study.

Rationale for Recommendation (Option 1):

The recommended option extends fish monitoring through 2041 to capture ten years of post-project monitoring from the expected treatments that are currently underway. The ten-year post restoration timeline was based on the same power analysis that was described above. Several large-scale and important projects are expected to be completed in the next five to seven years. The McGlinn Island Jetty project is particularly important to the study and is not expected to be completed until 2031. This project represents one of the few opportunities to study fish responses to restoring connectivity in the estuary. The Skagit IMW has a proven track record of providing relevant information to partners and is helping inform restoration and recovery efforts across Puget Sound. The IMW is focused on an important population, important key questions about estuaries, and is focused on Endangered Species Act-listed Chinook. Continuation of monitoring using the current approach and methodology is important to the integrity of the study and to maintaining important monitoring partnerships. The board does not fund habitat monitoring in the Skagit IMW.

Motions for Funding Decisions

Move to adopt the recommendation of the Science Advisory Panel and Monitoring Subcommittee which:

- Ends funding for Intensively Monitored Watershed habitat monitoring in all watersheds in 2025
- Ends funding for the Lower Columbia Intensively Monitored Watershed study in 2032
- Ends funding for the Hood Canal Intensively Monitored Watershed study in 2028
- Ends funding for the Straits Intensively Monitored Watershed study in 2028
- Ends funding for the Skagit Intensively Monitored Watershed study in 2041

Move to allocate \$50,000 of unobligated Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund monitoring funds to complete habitat data analysis for Lower Columbia, Hood Canal, and Straits.

References

[Zimmerman et al 2015. Intensively Monitored Watersheds Program: Lower Columbia River Study Plan Update, 2015. Report to the Washington Salmon Recovery Funding Board Monitoring Panel.](#)

[Anderson et al. 2015. Hood Canal Intensively Monitored Watershed Study Plan. Report to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board Monitoring Panel.](#)

Attachments

A. IMW Program Budget

DRAFT

Attachment A – IMW Program Budget

The table below provides an estimated budget for the IMW program under the recommendation detailed above. For comparison, it also includes costs for Option 1 for all IMWs (status quo). Exact amounts of funding will be based on detailed scopes of work and budgets for each IMW element and final funding amounts will be decided annually by the board.

Table Title: IMW Program budget under recommendation

IMW	PCSRF 2025	PCSRF 2026	PCSRF 2027	PCSRF 2028	PCSRF 2029	PCSRF 2030	PCSRF 2031	PCSRF 2032+
Lower Columbia	\$262,000	\$262,000	\$262,000	\$279,500	\$279,500	\$279,500	\$279,500	
Hood Canal	\$262,000	\$262,000	\$262,000					
Straits	\$309,000	\$309,000	\$141,000					
Skagit	\$333,000	\$333,000	\$333,000	\$333,000	\$333,000	\$333,000	\$333,000	\$333,000 per year
TOTAL								
Recommendation	\$1,166,000	\$1,166,000	\$998,000	\$612,500	\$612,500	\$612,500	\$612,500	\$333,000
Option 1	\$1,546,000	\$1,546,000	\$1,546,000	\$1,546,000	\$1,546,000	\$1,546,000	\$1,546,000	\$1,546,000
DIFFERENCE	\$380,000	\$380,000	\$548,000	\$933,500	\$933,500	\$933,500	\$933,500	\$1,213,000

The total amounts of funding needed to implement the recommended option in each IMW are detailed below:

- Lower Columbia - \$1.9M
- Hood Canal - \$786,000
- Straits- \$759,000
- Skagit - \$5.33M

Item 11: Acquisition Policy Changes

Action Requested: Briefing

Summary

This memo summarizes recent policy changes to *Manual 3: Acquisition Projects* approved by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board. These changes relate to eligibility of property under existing public ownership or management, eligibility of pre-agreement earnest or option payments, and combination project timeline requirements.

Acquisition Policy Changes Overview

Existing Public Property

Previously, Manual 3: Acquisition Projects prohibited acquisition of established outdoor recreation areas developed under ownership or management of a public agency unless: 1) state law requires compensation, 2) the land was not originally acquired for conservation or salmon recovery purposes, and 3) the land has not been managed for conservation or salmon recovery purposes. This policy supports investments that provide new, additional acreage beyond what is already available.

At the April 2025 meeting (Item 5), the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) approved a policy change, eliminating current and past management as an eligibility restriction for acquisition projects. This would allow an eligible applicant to propose acquisition of private land even if the property was being leased and managed for conservation or salmon recovery by a public agency. Additionally, an eligible applicant proposing acquisition of public land would only have to demonstrate that compensation is required, and that the land was not originally acquired for recreation or conservation purposes.

Earnest Money

Previously, “earnest money” and “option payments” were listed as an ineligible cost in Manual 3: Acquisition Projects. Prior to seeking public funding, eligible entities often provide earnest money in a purchase and sale agreement or purchase an option on a property. These approaches provide buyer and seller surety and are an important due diligence step required by Recreation and Conservation Office policy, which is consistent with RCW 8.26.180. These payments can be structured such that the value of any earnest or option payment is applied toward the purchase price of the property at closing.

At their April 2025 meeting (Item 5), the RCFB approved a policy change allowing earnest or option payments as an eligible incidental pre-agreement cost. These costs would become reimbursable provided they are applied to the reviewed, appraised value of the property at closing during the grant performance period.

Combination Project Timelines

Previously, RCFB policy required that the acquisition component be closed or executed within ninety days of the board funding meeting. Alternately, projects funded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (board) provide eighteen months to close the acquisition component of a combination project.

At their April 2025 meeting (Item 5), the RCFB approved extending this timeline to 18 months, which would match the current timeline requirements for combination projects funded by the board.

Item 12: Future Riparian Approaches

Summary

Previously, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board encouraged staff to consider different approaches for delivering riparian-specific funding. The goal is to create strategies that are more responsive to practitioner needs and statewide goals. This memo summarizes additional input from lead entities and the technical review panel, and also provides relevant case studies and lists more specific potential actions the Recreation and Conservation Office could consider as directed by the board.

Action Requested: Direction

Background

During the [December 2024 \(Item 8\)](#) meeting, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board discussed different approaches for delivering riparian-specific funding. This was in response to robust feedback from a diverse range of experts and funders, recommendations from the Riparian Roundtable, and the potential for the Climate Commitment Act to support riparian projects.

The board agreed to look at future opportunities to deliver riparian-specific dollars in ways that support three desired outcomes:

- **Stable, dedicated funding (program level)** – Larger funding amount guaranteed across multiple biennia to maintain an effective riparian program at the watershed level.
- **Flexible, strategic scope (project level)** – More flexible application of funding across reaches, project types, and partners, as guided by an implementation plan or strategy.
- **Quick, effective oversight (parcel level)** – Internal agency reviews that respond to emergent on-the-ground opportunities outside of the traditional grant round.

Specifically, staff proposed focusing on inquiries related to the contents and scope of riparian strategies, alternate options for technical review, and different contracting mechanisms.

Additional Feedback

Since the December 2024 meeting, staff had additional internal discussions and hosted listening sessions with salmon grants managers, the Technical Review Panel, and Lead Entities. The following represent key takeaways from these conversations:

- There is nearly universal agreement that a more responsive strategy for riparian dollars is needed.
- Different riparian project types have different grant-making needs. For example, acquisition projects may benefit most by having funding available quickly. Alternately, stewardship funding may benefit most by having flexibility across sites and years.
- Different watersheds may be interested in different desired outcomes. For example, watersheds with a sole implementor for riparian planting and stewardship projects may benefit more from a flexible structure between a sponsor and RCO. In this instance, there may be little change to a lead entity's current role. Alternatively, larger watersheds with multiple implementors may find it more advantageous for a lead entity to actively manage a riparian strategy outside of a traditional grant round.
- Next steps in the discussion should consider best options under our current constraints, while also moving together toward a more strategy-based approach.
- Some watersheds may be unable to shift to a strategy-based approach for riparian dollars on their own, even with significant potential incentives. There may be a need for the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and/or other agencies to proactively support that transition with funding outside the regional allocation, development of consistent methodologies or guidance, providing technical assistance capacity, etc.
- The riparian strategies development should be a proactive, collaborative effort with the Washington State Conservation Commission. Both agencies have riparian funding sources with overlapping goals. That process could help ensure funding is strategically leveraged in ways that maximize salmon recovery impact while considering agricultural viability.

Case Studies

Since the December 2024 meeting, staff completed additional outreach to solicit and identify examples of lead entities or other funders to aid discussion. Below are two case studies illustrating different relationships between program funding, project scope, and oversight relative to the desired outcomes.

Hood Canal Knotweed Control

The first case study is the Hood Canal Coordinating Council’s approach to controlling knotweed in support of riparian function and salmon recovery. This example illustrates how a joint strategy for a specific project type (invasive species control) provides a pathway for more predictable funding at the lead entity level, along with additional project flexibility at the agency level. The table below describes key features of the case study relative to the desired outcomes.

Hood Canal Knotweed Control Summary Table

Desired Outcome	Description
Stable, dedicated funding	The Hood Canal Lead Entity consistently funds this work with its allocation, to provide program stability over multiple years to the extent possible within a competitive annual ranking process. This involves being actively elevated to the funding level, as riparian projects typically do not rank high locally. Ultimately, the board approves the funding for individual grant agreements as part of the annual grant round.
Flexible, strategic scope	Actions are guided by the Hood Canal Regional Knotweed Control Strategy. Because the actions are guided by a clear strategy and implemented by long-standing sponsors, RCO has allowed projects to be scoped more flexibly across watersheds, with the ability to add new worksites as priority opportunities become available.
Quick, effective oversight	Individual project proposals undergo local review, as well as a full state technical review as part of the annual grant round.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

The second case study is the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's [Focused Investment Partnerships](#). This example illustrates how a regional strategic action plan provides a pathway for rolling funding of priority projects by an agency director, as well as a streamlined technical review at the state level. The table below describes key features of this case study relative to the desired outcomes.

Focused Investment Partnerships Summary Table

Desired Outcome	Description
Stable, dedicated funding	Ongoing funding is committed to support high-performing partnerships over three biennia (six years), provided that clear and measurable restoration progress is being made.
Flexible, strategic scope	Project funding decisions are guided by a strategic action plan , which is a requirement to apply for partnership funding. Individual funding awards within a partnership are made on a rolling basis by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Director, whose authority is delegated by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.
Quick, effective oversight	Individual project proposals undergo local review by the partnership on a rolling basis relative to the strategic action plan. The scope of state-level technical review is about how to make the project better, not about funding, location or project type.

Potential Next Steps

Near Term Options

Below are near-term options RCO staff could assess further. These ideas have been explored through the work to date and may support certain desired outcomes. These options are considered nearer-term because they involve operational changes or things RCO already has experience with. They do not necessarily depend on external efforts, inter-agency partnerships, or additional outside funding.

- **Riparian Panel** – Designate a qualified subset of the review panel as “riparian panel members” to specifically support technical oversight for project types such as acquisitions, riparian planting, and site stewardship. This would involve shifting how work is assigned without creating a new expense. For example, this group could provide technical reviews of new proposed projects on a rolling basis, oversight as needed for agreements adding new properties, assistance on draft planting or stewardship plans, or provide approval recommendations to the board on existing or new riparian strategies.
- **Delegate Funding Authority** – Delegate authority to the RCO Director to approve funding awards for certain riparian-specific project types (i.e., acquisitions and riparian planting). With a riparian panel, this could create the ability to review and obligate funding for priority projects that would not otherwise be viable by the next grant round.
- **Automatic Funding Renewal** – Allow for automatic funding renewal to ongoing riparian-specific agreements without developing a new application or technical review. For example, if a lead entity wants to provide additional funding to a conservation district for a series of planting projects on a priority reach, RCO could issue a new agreement with updated metrics and obligate funding as soon as it is available for the biennium.

Longer-Term

Below are long-term options that RCO staff could continue to scope further. These items are considered longer-term because they involve significant policy development and may be dependent on a combination of additional funding, ongoing external efforts, or partnership development with other agencies.

- **Strategy Components** – Continue to consider the appropriate scope and scale of riparian implementation strategies in coordination with the Washington State Conservation Commission and other agencies.
- **Block Grant** – Work with the Office of the Attorney General to confirm statutory interpretation and limits of the board’s block grant authority as described in [RCW 77.85.130](#) relative to riparian-specific funding. Based on this interpretation, work to better understand which lead entities would be able and interested in receiving block grants for riparian-specific funding pending the completion of a riparian implementation strategy.

- **Funding Riparian Strategies** – Better estimate the full funding need for development of riparian strategies, as well as a local interest in a consistent approach with state-level technical capacity and guidance.

Board Direction

Moving forward, staff have the following questions for the board related to the information and potential next steps provided above:

- Are there any key takeaways that you identify with or that rise to the top for you in terms of importance?
- Would you benefit from additional case studies that illustrate how others are thinking about these issues? If so, what kinds of examples would be most helpful?
- Are there any of the next steps that you feel have the greatest potential and which you would like to discuss in more detail in the near term?
- Alternately, are there potential next steps that create concerns for you relative to the desired outcomes?

Item 13: Funding Allocation for Board Programs

Summary

This memo provides information about the actual and projected funding for the 2025-27 biennium and about specific activities and funding decisions that will advance the Salmon Recovery Funding Board's strategic plan.

Action Requested: Decision

Background

The Legislature and Governor approved the 2025-2027 biennial state budget that includes funding for salmon recovery. The 25-27 biennium begins July 1, 2025. The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) distributes the funding via an annual grant round for habitat projects and for project development by lead entities.

Each year, RCO submits a single Washington State application to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) grant funding. The application is prepared on behalf of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.

The board portion of the PCSRF application includes funding for habitat projects, monitoring (required by NOAA), administration, capacity, and activities. Capacity is the established organizational foundation that allows salmon recovery to take place at the grassroots level by maintaining a network of regional organizations. Activities include funding for hatchery reform projects and monitoring by Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, board monitoring projects, science advisory panel, review panel, Salmon Recovery Network, Salmon Recovery Conference, database updates, and cultural resources staff.

Available Funds

Budget for the Biennium

Federal Funding: NOAA has not yet informed RCO of the amount of Washington State's 2025 PCSRF award. This memo is based on what was allocated in 2021.

State Funding: The State's 2025-27 biennial budgets include:

- \$4,382,000 in general state funds for lead entities and regions
- \$25 million in capital funds for salmon recovery, which includes:
 - \$2,400,000 million in lead entity capacity funding
 - \$640,000 to the Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups for project development. (It is important to note that the funding provided to lead entities and Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups is only to develop projects – any other capacity costs are not eligible to be covered with these capital funds)
 - \$250,000 for review panel
 - \$250,000 for Spokane Lead Entity projects in 2026 grant round
 - \$500,000 for cost increases
 - \$19,930,000 for salmon recovery projects
 - \$1,030,000 (4.12 percent) to RCO to administer these grants and contracts
- \$20 million in capital funds for riparian projects, which includes:
 - \$100,000 for review panel
 - \$19,076,000 for riparian projects
 - \$824,000 (4.12 percent) to RCO to administer these grants and contracts

Returned Funds: "Returned funds" refers to money allocated to projects and activities in previous biennia that is returned to RCO when projects or activities either close under budget or are not completed. These dollars return to the overall budget. Returned funds have historically been used for cost increases and to increase the funding available for projects in the upcoming grant round provided the Legislature re-appropriates the funds as part of either the regular capital budget or a stand-alone re-appropriation bill. The legislature has re-appropriated these unspent funds from earlier biennia.

Currently \$5,149,560 in returned project funds are available for the 2025 grant round.

Funding Scenario

Table 1 displays the range of funding available for board decisions for the biennium. This scenario includes the state appropriation of \$25 million and the potential \$18.4 million award for 2025 NOAA PCSRF award to Washington State.

Table 2 outlines the range of funding obligations for each year of the biennium. The project funding displayed depicts the total project funding available split between fiscal year 2026 and fiscal year 2027. The board must determine how much funding to use for the 2025 and 2026 grant rounds.

Staff are presenting a budget with an assumption that RCO will receive federal funds. If federal funds are not available, there will need to be a special board meeting in **July or August, 2025**, to discuss lead entity and regional support, review panel, science advisory panel, monitoring, and future grant round amounts.

Table 1: Available and Project Funding for the Biennium by Type

Fund Uses	2025-2027 State General Funds	2025-2027 State Capital Bond Funds (Riparian)	2025-2027 State Capital Bond Funds (Salmon)	2025 Federal PCSRF (projected)	Total
Projects		\$19,076,000	\$19,930,000	\$8,800,260	\$47,806,260
Spokane Projects			\$250,000		\$250,000
Cost Increases			\$500,000		\$500,000
Lead Entity Capacity	\$3,164,888		\$2,400,000		\$5,564,888
Region Capacity	\$1,217,112			\$2,878,685	\$4,095,797
Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups			\$640,000		\$640,000
Review Panel		\$100,000	\$250,000	\$200,000	\$550,000
Monitoring Activities *				\$2,350,000	\$2,350,000
				\$3,643,743	\$3,643,743
RCO Administration		\$824,000	\$1,030,000	\$527,312	\$2,381,312

Fund Uses	2025-2027 State General Funds	2025-2027 State Capital Bond Funds (Riparian)	2025-2027 State Capital Bond Funds (Salmon)	2025 Federal PCSRF (projected)	Total
Total New Funding	\$4,382,000	\$20,000,000	\$25,000,000	\$18,400,000	\$67,782,000
Returned Funds			\$1,720,849	\$3,428,711	\$5,149,560
Total Funds Available	\$4,382,000	\$20,000,000	\$26,720,849	\$21,828,711	\$72,931,560

*Activities include funding for hatchery reform projects and monitoring by Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Salmon Recovery Network, Salmon Recovery Conference, database updates, and cultural resources staff.

Table 2: Fund Uses for the 25-27 Biennium by Fiscal Year

Fund Uses	State Fiscal Year 2026	State Fiscal Year 2027
Capacity		
Lead Entities, General	\$1,582,444	\$1,582,444
Lead Entities, State Bond	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000
Regions, General	\$608,556	\$608,556
<i>Regions, Federal PCSRF</i>	\$2,878,685	
Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups, State Bond	\$320,000	\$320,000
Subtotal	\$6,589,685	\$3,711,000
Projects		
Riparian Projects, State Bond	\$19,076,000	
Salmon Projects, State Bond	\$9,965,000	\$9,965,000
Spokane Projects, State Bond		\$250,000
<i>Salmon Projects, Federal PCSRF</i>	\$8,800,260	
Returned funds, (State and Federal)	\$5,149,560	
Salmon Projects Subtotal	\$23,914,820	\$10,215,000
Cost Increases, State Bond	\$500,000	
Projects Subtotal	\$43,490,820	\$10,215,000

Fund Uses	State Fiscal Year 2026	State Fiscal Year 2027
Other Activities		
<i>Review Panel (Federal PCSRF)</i>	\$200,000	
Review Panel (Salmon, State Bond)	\$250,000	
Review Panel (Riparian, State Bond)	\$100,000	
<i>Monitoring and Science Advisory Panel (Federal PCSRF)</i>	\$2,350,000	
<i>Communications (Federal PCSRF)</i>	\$30,000	
<i>Salmon Recovery Conference (Federal PCSRF)</i>	\$40,000	
<i>Cultural Resources Staff (Federal PCSRF)</i>	\$295,618	
<i>PCSRF Activities (Federal PCSRF)</i>	\$3,278,125	
Other Activities Subtotal	\$6,543,743	\$0
RCO Administration		
RCO Administration (Riparian, State Bond)	\$824,000	
RCO Administration (Salmon, State Bond)	\$515,000	\$515,000
<i>RCO Administration (Federal PCSRF)</i>	\$527,312	
Administration Subtotal	\$1,866,312	\$515,000
Total	\$58,490,560	\$14,441,000

2025 Grant Round (Fiscal Year 2026)

Salmon Projects

The board funds salmon projects with state and federal money. Most funds received are dedicated to projects, capacity, and monitoring. Funding is determined annually based on Washington State's annual PCSRF grant award and the state dollars appropriated by the Washington State Legislature each biennium as shown in Table 1. The board will determine grant round amounts for year 1 and 2 of the biennium.

Technical Review Panel

To ensure that every project funded by the board is technically sound, the board's technical review panel evaluates projects to assess whether they have a high benefit to salmon, a high likelihood of success, and that project costs do not outweigh the

anticipated benefits of the project. Funding for the review panel comes from several sources.

Table 3: Review Panel Funding Sources

Source	Amount
2025 PCSRF (projected)	\$200,000
Board Salmon State	\$250,000
Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration	\$250,000
Riparian	\$100,000
TOTAL	\$800,000

Cost Increases

Each year, the board reserves \$500,000 in addition to the grant round target for cost increase amendments requested by project sponsors for Board projects. These funds are first-come, first-served to sponsors seeking additional funds for essential cost increases to accomplish their existing scopes of work. The RCO director has authority to approve cost increases or to request review and approval by the board. Amendments are reported to the board at each meeting.

Riparian Projects

In 2025, the legislature provided \$20 million to RCO for riparian projects. This is a continuation of the funding received in the 2023 legislative session that was awarded at the September 2024 board meeting.

Table 4: Regional Allocations for Project Funding

Recovery Region	Percent	Riparian Allocation (State Bond)	Board Allocation (State Bond and Projected Federal PCSRF)
Hood Canal Coordinating Council	2.4%	\$457,824	\$573,956
Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board	20.00%	\$3,815,200	\$4,782,964
Northeast Washington	1.90%	\$362,444	\$454,382
Puget Sound Partnership	38%	\$7,248,880	\$9,087,632
Snake River Salmon Recovery Board	8.44%	\$1,610,014	\$2,018,411

Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board	10.31%	\$1,966,736	\$2,465,618
Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership	9.57%	\$1,825,573	\$2,288,648
Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board	9.38%	\$1,789,329	\$2,243,210
TOTAL	100.00%	\$19,076,000	\$23,914,821

Staff Recommendations

Staff recommends the board use the interim project allocation formula approved by the board at the March 2, 2017, board meeting to determine regional grant round amounts.

Staff recommends the board approve up to \$800,000 for the Technical Review Panel.

Staff recommends the board approve \$500,000 for cost increases.

Regional Organization and Lead Capacity Contracts

Existing Lead Entity capacity grants end June 30, 2025. Most of the funding provides capacity for lead entity coordinators to coordinate their citizen and technical committees. A small portion of these funds are used for training, a stipend for the Washington Salmon Coalition) chair, and a facilitator for Washington Salmon Coalition activities.

Due to the timing of receiving the PCSRF allocation, RCO extended the regional organization grants until August 31, 2025.

Table 5 reflects the amount each entity would receive for each fiscal year.

RCO requested \$2,878,685 for Regional Organizations in the 2025 PCSRF award. (Table 6)

Table 5: Proposed Lead Entity and Regional Organization Funding for Fiscal Years (FY) 2026 and 2027

Organization	Proposed Funding Fiscal Year 2026	Proposed Funding Fiscal Year 2027
Chehalis Basin Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
Hood Canal Lead Entity	\$115,802	\$115,802

Organization	Proposed Funding Fiscal Year 2026	Proposed Funding Fiscal Year 2027
Island County Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
Klickitat Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
Lower Columbia Lead Entity	\$194,579	\$194,579
Nisqually Lead Entity	\$90,470	\$90,470
North. Olympic Peninsula Read Entity LE	\$115,802	\$115,802
North Pacific Coast Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
Willapa Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
Pend Oreille Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
Pierce County Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
Quinault Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
San Juan Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
Skagit Lead Entity	\$115,802	\$115,802
Snake River Lead Entity	\$170,120	\$170,120
Snohomish Lead Entity	\$90,402	\$90,402
Stillaguamish Lead Entity	\$89,747	\$89,747
Upper Columbia Lead Entity	\$186,456	\$186,456
West Sound Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
WRIA 1 Lead Entity	\$94,089	\$94,089
WRIA 13 Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
WRIA 14 Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
WRIA 8 Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
WRIA 9 Lead Entity	\$86,852	\$86,852
Yakima Basin Lead Entity	\$170,120	\$170,120
Spokane Lead Entity	\$96,200	\$96,200
WA Salmon Coalition Chair	\$4,500	\$4,500
WA Salmon Coalition Training	\$8,000	\$8,000
WA Salmon Coalition Facilitator	\$24,000	\$24,000
Lower Columbia Region	\$142,914	\$142,914
Snake Region	\$123,038	\$123,038

Organization	Proposed Funding Fiscal Year 2026	Proposed Funding Fiscal Year 2027
Yakima Region	\$151,431	\$151,431
Upper Columbia Region	\$139,128	\$139,128
Coast Region	\$52,055	\$52,055

Table 6: Projected PCSRF Capacity Funding for Salmon Recovery Regions

Regional Organization	Proposed FY25 PCSRF Funding
Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board	\$456,850
Hood Canal Coordinating Council	\$375,000
Puget Sound Partnership	\$689,162
Snake River Salmon Recovery Board	\$333,588
Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board	\$435,000
Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership	\$304,085
Yakima Valley Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board	\$285,000
Total	\$2,878,685

Staff Recommendations Capacity Funding Options

Staff recommends the board approve the operating funds as outlined in Table 5. This includes funding for all the lead entities, state capacity funding for regional organizations, funding for Washington Salmon Coalition training, funding for a lead entity coordinator to serve as the chair of Washington Salmon Coalition, and funding for a Washington Salmon Coalition facilitator.

Staff recommends the board approve federal funds for fiscal year 2026 as outlined in Table 6, plus any returned funds from previous PCSRF awards.

Monitoring

The following decisions are specific to the ongoing board-funded monitoring efforts included in the 2025 PCSRF application. These board-funded monitoring efforts have been reviewed by the Science Advisory Panel and are addressed in its recommendations. Board monitoring efforts currently include the Intensively Monitored Watersheds program and the regional monitoring program. The board also employs the services of a science panel to review projects and help coordinate and prioritize assessment of habitat restoration efforts. Funding for the 2025 regional monitoring grant program was approved at the September 2024 board meeting using \$973,855 of

unobligated 2022 and 2023 PCSRF funds. There will not be another grant round until 2027.

The total amount available from PCSRF 2025 for board-funded monitoring and the science advisory panel is \$2,350,000.

Intensively Monitored Watersheds (IMW) \$1,166,000

The Intensively Monitored Watershed program continues to provide population-scale monitoring results to evaluate the success of habitat restoration in increasing salmon production. The board supports four Intensively Monitored Watershed studies across western Washington – the Lower Columbia, Hood Canal, Strait of Juan de Fuca, and Skagit. These studies have been ongoing since 2003 and are implemented in partnership with Tribal, federal, and state partners. RCO requests \$1,166,000 for Intensively Monitored Watershed studies from the 2025 PCSRF award. This funding supports data collection and analysis and reflects information provided by staff in Memo 10 for the June 2025 board meeting. Funding will support partners implementing Intensively Monitored Watershed studies (see below).

Science Advisory Panel \$100,000

The science advisory panel is entering its twelfth year of operation. The science panel is tasked with supporting implementation of the Intensively Monitored Watershed studies and reviewing projects submitted through the regional monitoring program. The science panel's expertise and input ensures that monitoring projects and programs are technically sound and contribute valuable information to salmon recovery efforts. RCO requests \$100,000 from the 2025 PCSRF award for the Science Advisory Panel.

Unobligated \$1,084,000

Unobligated monitoring funds are used at the discretion of the board to support regional monitoring grant rounds and/or other projects that support board monitoring priorities.

Staff Recommendations on Monitoring

Staff recommends the board delegate authority to the RCO director to enter into contracts for monitoring efforts and Science Advisory Panel support as displayed in Table 7. Decisions about unobligated funds will be addressed at future board meetings.

Table 7: PCSRF 2025 Board Funded Monitoring Efforts

Project	Amount
Intensively Monitored Watersheds - NOAA Skagit River Systems Cooperative, and Lower Elwha S'Klallam Tribe	\$642,000
Intensively Monitored Watersheds - WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (fish)	\$524,000
Science Advisory Panel	\$100,000
Unobligated	\$1,084,000
Total	\$2,350,000

Motions

Motions for Projects:

Move to use the interim project allocation formula approved by the board at the March 2, 2017, board meeting to determine regional grant round amounts.

Move to approve funds for the Salmon Recovery Funding Board Technical Review Panel.

Move to approve \$500,000 for Salmon Recovery Funding Board project cost increases.

Motions for Capacity:

Move to delegate authority to the Director to enter into contracts with the Lead Entities and Regional Organizations to fund capacity for the 2025-27 biennium using the funding amounts in Table 5 and Table 6.

Motions for Monitoring:

Move to delegate authority to the Recreation and Conservation Office director to enter into contracts for the monitoring efforts displayed in Table 7. The contracts shall not exceed \$2,350,000 for fiscal year 2026.



REGIONAL FISHERIES COALITION

June 3-4, 2025

SALMON RECOVERY FUNDING BOARD PARTNERS UPDATE

Brian Burns, President

Tri-State Steelheaders

Jason Lundgren, Vice President

Cascade Fisheries

Antonia Jindrich, Secretary

Mid Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group

Alison Studley, Treasurer

Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group

Gary Ranz

Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association

Mary Brueggeman

Sound Salmon Solutions

Lance Winecka

South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group

Jeanne Robinson

Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group

Sarah Doyle

North Olympic Salmon Coalition

Chad Wilkins

Pacific Coast Salmon Coalition

Maria Cerdena

Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force

David Lewis

Willapa Bay Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group

Morgan Morris

Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group

Margaret Neuman

Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group

Kaylee Galloway

RFC Strategic Coordinator

Brynn Brady

RFC Legislative Advocate

Dear Salmon Recovery Funding Board,

The Regional Fisheries Coalition (RFC) is grateful for the opportunity to provide you a partner update. I am Jason Lundgren, RFC Vice President and the Executive Director of Cascade Fisheries, one of Washington's fourteen Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups (RFEs). RFEs are independent non-profit organizations established in 1990 by the WA State Legislature to engage communities in restoring salmon populations. Today, RFE's sponsor some of the largest, most complex habitat projects for threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead across the state.

A lot has happened since our last partners update. RFEs continue to grapple with federal and state budget cuts and overall uncertainty. Our organizations are resilient, but we feel vulnerable during these trying times. We're concerned that our collective investments to recover salmon across the state is being undermined and we call on our state leaders and partners to double down on our shared commitment to salmon recovery and honoring and tribal treaty fishing rights.

Furthermore, we're of the firm opinion that increased investment is needed to keep pace with the state's salmon recovery goals and plans, and to offset the increased scope, scale, complexity, and cost of salmon recovery work. This month's partner report includes a brief update on RFC's state and federal advocacy efforts.

Also, since the SRFB is touring projects in King County, we want to take a moment to spotlight our two RFEs that serve King County: Mid Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group and Sound Salmon Solutions.

Thanks again for the time to present and for your continued support.

STATE ADVOCACY UPDATE

RFC watched this legislative session closely. We understand this was a very challenging session for a number of reasons including the daunting budget deficit. While we are extremely grateful the state legislature maintained our modest RFEG base and capital funding, we unfortunately saw debilitating cuts to outdoor education funding, including a complete budget cut of OSPI funds for a very popular education program sponsored by RFEGs called Salmon in the Schools.



Cuts to WDFW's Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account Volunteer Cooperative Grant Program is also affecting some RFEG's workforce and bringing about uncertainty to summer work plans. RFEGs were also disappointed that the Legislature did not pass the bill to improve and extend the Habitat Recovery Pilot Program (HRPP). Several RFEGs benefited from HRPP, saving both time and money on project completion. RFEGs continue to work with WDFW, our agency sponsor, to better understand the full effects of the budget cuts.

RFEGs appreciate continued investments into critical grant programs like Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board, Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program, Washington Coastal Restoration and Resiliency Initiative, Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration, Riparian grant programs, and Floodplains by Design, among others, but recognize the need far outpaces available resources. RFEGs rely on these grant programs to complete our work, and continue to advocate for match modernization across all salmon recovery grant programs to reduce administrative barriers and improve over all efficiency.

FEDERAL ADVOCACY UPDATE

RFC has also been active at the federal level. We submitted our federal programmatic appropriations request to the WA delegation. As in previous years, the RFC advocates for increased funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and requests direct funding of \$3.8 million to support RFEGs. Federal funds are leveraged to build organizational capacity, enhance community participation, implement high priority salmon recovery projects, and protect healthy watersheds on which our communities and economy depend. What is happening at the federal level threatens our future and our organizations' ability to complete critical salmon recovery projects. RFEGs organizational capacity was already strained, so losing any federal funding, including cuts to AmeriCorp, is impacting some RFEGs ability to do the work. We appreciate any support our partners can give.

Morgan Morris, Executive Director of Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group, represented RFC at this year's Puget Sound Day on the Hill. Morgan attended group sessions and individual meetings with our Congressmembers and their staff, and advocated for our shared federal funding priorities, as well as FEMA-related legislation introduced by Senator Murray.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS:

MID SOUND FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP

Mid Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group works in three central Puget Sound watersheds: the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish (WRIA 8) in King County, the Green/Duwamish and Central Puget Sound (WRIA 9) in King County, and the West Sound (WRIA 15) in Kitsap County. In the last year, Mid Sound advanced 22 projects, planted 14,831 trees, opened 1.77 miles of habitat, engaged volunteers for 1,859 hours, and leveraged over \$2.5 million for the benefit of the fish and people in the central Puget Sound region. One of their projects is the Bear Creek Floodplain Reconnection.

For this project, Mid Sound partnered with a private landowner to construct a stream realignment and wood installation project on Bear Creek, a priority stream in the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish watershed. Muckleshoot tribal biologist Martin Fox partnered to design the in-stream wood placement. Project outcomes included 200 ft of new low-velocity side channel habitat by grading and wood placement; 34,000 sq ft of restored riparian buffer to add shade and improve water quality and improved channel complexity and rearing habitat through increased wood volume to an amount that exceeds the Fox & Bolton 75th percentile for median wood pieces per 100m. Mid Sound planted 2,600 native plants (container and live stake) in the riparian area. Mid Sound will be monitoring the effectiveness of this project for the next few years.



SOUND SALMON SOLUTIONS

Sound Salmon Solutions (SSS) supports salmon recovery in the Stillaguamish (WRIA 5), Island (WRIA 6), Snoqualmie/Skykomish (WRIA 7), and Lake Washington/Sammamish/Cedar River (WRIA 8) watersheds. In the last year, SSS completed 17 restoration projects, planted 38,167 trees, restored 3.77 miles of stream and 65 acres, engaged volunteers for over 2,000 hours, and released 89,000 Coho for Salmon in the Schools classes and public releases from their hatchery. SSS also hosts Salish Scientists Summer Camp for three weeks each summer for 3rd through 5th grades and 5th through 7th grades.

Salish Scientists is a week-long, hands-on, outdoor day camp located at the SSS hatchery in Edmonds. Campers get to explore a wetland, investigate water quality, and learn to be a steward to their environment, all while meeting new friends and growing their independence. Salish Scientists empowers students with the knowledge to make waves within their communities and has students diving into the realm of scientific inquiry and using professional tools to complete their own research of freshwater, marsh, and coastal ecosystems.



This camp integrates a place-based, interdisciplinary approach to learning that builds upon ecological concepts and related experiences. Students gain a deeper understanding of the environmental challenges our region faces. SSS works with our youth in the area to create viable interworking communities of empowerment and stewardship of their surrounding world.

ABOUT THE REGIONAL FISHERIES COALITION

The Regional Fisheries Coalition (RFC) is the unified voice advocating for the common mission of the fourteen Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups (RFEs) that were established in 1990 by RCW 77.95, to protect and restore salmon populations in Washington State. Each RFE is a separate, local, nonprofit organization with its own board of directors and is supported by its members and community.

RFEs sponsor and complete large scale habitat restoration and fish passage barrier removal projects by leveraging state and federal funding. They coordinate robust education, outreach, and volunteer programs to engage communities in salmon recovery. RFEs partner with landowners, tribes, local governments, volunteers, state and federal agencies, and many non-governmental organizations to lead their communities in successful restoration, education, and monitoring projects. Each RFE has one representative on the RFC Board of Directors.



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Included below is a summary of our 2024 Annual Report. Our theme this year is From Classroom to Creek: Empowering Tomorrow's Watershed Stewards Today. In addition to completing complex salmon recovery projects, including habitat restoration and fish passage barrier removal, RFEs provide outreach and education programs to promote knowledge and awareness in schools and communities. For example, the Salmon in the Schools (SITS) program currently serves 173 high poverty schools in 73 school districts, and engages over 11,000 students across the state. RFE education programs combine classroom learning and field work that empowers the next generation of environmental stewards. Unfortunately, OSPI funding for Salmon in the Schools was cut this biennium, which threatens the future of this program.

“The dedication and impactful work being done by the RFEs plays a crucial role in fostering healthy ecosystems. By engaging with local stewards and educating the next generation, they are not only restoring stream processes and salmon populations but also instilling a sense of environmental responsibility in our youth. The resilience and adaptability cultivated through their efforts helps ensure that both our landscapes and communities are better prepared for the future.”

~ Chris Waldbillig, Restoration Coordinator, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife

This year's annual report feature incredible projects and programs from each of the 14 RFEs including projects that demonstrate work in habitat, education, enhancement, and monitoring as well as leveraging public investment, engaging a new generation, restoring natural processes, and measuring our impact. Read the full 2024 RFC Annual Report at:

2023-24.regionalfisheriescoalition.org

RFC Contact: Kaylee Galloway, kaylee@alloftheaboveconsulting.com, (360) 489-9192



REGIONAL FISHERIES
COALITION

From Classroom to Creek

Empowering Tomorrow's
Watershed Stewards Today

"Little salmon off you go, it's been so fun to watch you grow, to the river then the sea, and hopefully someday back to me."

HARPER B., SALMON IN THE CLASSROOM PARTICIPANT

Regional Fisheries Coalition Annual Report 2023-24

Since 1990, the 14 Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups (RFEs) that comprise the Regional Fisheries Coalition (RFC) have collaborated with communities to achieve results greater than the sum of our parts. Our long-term approach spans immediate habitat improvements to decades-long investments in both our watersheds and our youth.

We know that when we plant streamside trees today, they'll benefit generations of salmon and people well into the future. Similarly, when we educate students from our classrooms to our creeks, we empower tomorrow's watershed stewards to carry this work forward. Learn more about this year's achievements in our *2023-24 Annual Report*: www.2023-24.regionalfisheriescoalition.org

Addressing the most critical issues in salmon recovery:

- ✓ HABITAT
- ✓ EDUCATION
- ✓ ENHANCEMENT
- ✓ MONITORING

30+ YEARS OF IMPACT
FOR SALMON



95,102,592
Fish
Released



1,071
Fish Passage
Projects Completed



1,520
Miles of Stream
Opened



2,006,605
Volunteer
Hours



4,950
Salmon Projects
Completed



2,457
Miles of
Restoration



"Our waterways and fish populations are vital to our region's economy, culture, and way of life. Partnerships with Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups are critical to ensuring community voices are heard as we work toward a healthier future for our environment and iconic species." - Representative Derek Kilmer (WA-06)

2023-2024 Project Themes

ENGAGING A NEW GENERATION: Through hands-on education, we are cultivating tomorrow's environmental stewards, equipping them with the knowledge and passion to champion salmon recovery for years to come.

RESTORING NATURAL PROCESSES: By shifting from engineered to nature-based approaches, we're allowing rivers to reclaim their natural rhythms, creating resilient ecosystems that benefit both salmon and communities.

MEASURING OUR IMPACT: With rigorous monitoring and innovative research, we're tracking our progress and adapting our strategies, ensuring that each restoration effort brings us closer to thriving salmon populations.

2023-24 Funding: State & Federal Dollars Matched 1:8

Habitat restoration projects are intricate and often demand diverse funding sources. Initial funding from state and federal grants, such as from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Recreation and Conservation Office, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, acts as the seed money. RFEGs then leverage each dollar, turning it into an additional \$8, significantly magnifying the original investment.

2023-24 By the Numbers



2,343,000
Fish
Released



68
Miles of
Restoration



44
Miles of Habitat
Opened



68,000
Volunteer
Hours



28
Fish Passage
Projects



29,000
Carcasses
Distributed

Visit our complete
2023-24 Annual Report
online for:

- ✓ IMPACT MAP
- ✓ FINANCIALS
- ✓ PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS
- ✓ PHOTO GALLERY

Supported By:



LEARN MORE:



Our 2023-24 Annual Report
www.2023-24.regionalfisheriescoalition.org



RFC website
www.regionalfisheriescoalition.org

Funding for the RFEGs comes from the US Fish & Wildlife Service's *Partners for Fish and Wildlife* program, a portion of fishing license fees, excess egg and carcass sales from State-funded hatcheries, and general funds from WDFW.

LEAD ENTITY HAPPENINGS

Stillaguamish Riparian Practitioners Workgroup

Submitted by Dani Driscoll, Stillaguamish Lead Entity



Stillaguamish Tribe owned property where the Tribe and Sound Salmon Solutions planted different areas of the site.

With encouragement from staff at the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians and the Snohomish Conservation District, the Stillaguamish Lead Entity Coordinator convened a riparian practitioner's workgroup for the Stillaguamish Basin. This group includes practitioners from the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, Tulalip Tribes, Sound Salmon Solutions, Adopt a Stream, Snohomish Conservation District, Snohomish County Surface Water Management, Snohomish County Noxious Weed Coordinator, and The Nature Conservancy. It's designed to enhance coordination and knowledge-sharing, align restoration efforts, and learn from each other's successes and challenges in the field. The primary goals include increasing collaboration, taking innovative approaches to capacity building, developing shared outreach strategies, collaborating on funding opportunities, and prioritizing on-the-ground implementation. Members collaborate to implement the Stillaguamish Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan's riparian restoration targets at the sub-basin or reach scale through shared grant opportunities.

The workgroup provides a space to discuss riparian restoration topics such as climate resilience, permitting hurdles, labor and capacity constraints, vegetation management, and innovative restoration techniques. Through shared site visits, resource-sharing, and collaborative grant opportunities, members are working to improve the efficiency and impact of riparian restoration in the basin.

Recently, the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians lead a collaborative grant proposal with workgroup partners, for a request of \$2.25 million from the new *Puget Sound Riparian Systems Lead Grant Program*. This funding opportunity was made available through Environmental Protection Agency funds and developed by the Washington State Department of Ecology and Bonneville Environmental Foundation, in partnership with regional experts. The Stillaguamish group's proposal was awarded \$2.25 million, reflecting the strength of its collaborative approach and shared commitment to strategic restoration.

East Fork Lewis River Reconnection Project – Improving Habitat for Fish and People

Submitted by Denise Smee, Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board Lead Entity



Aerial image of the Ridgefield Pits.

On May 9, 2025 the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership held a groundbreaking celebration for the East Fork Lewis River Reconnection Project. This project is over 30 years in the making to raise and leverage funds to improve fish passage to high quality upstream habitat, reconnect 300 acres of floodplain and 1.3 miles of side channel habitat, restore 2.5 miles of spawning and rearing habitat, reestablish 100 acres of floodplain forest to absorb and distribute flood waters, reduce flood and erosion risks to homes, businesses, hiking trails, and other infrastructure, and support the genetic diversity of a wild steelhead population. With dozens of partners and \$24.5 million dollars, this project will provide beneficial habitat for five species of salmonids and provide hundreds of local jobs to the area.

Historically, this area was a forested wetland with a braided channel system, multiple side channels, and a well-connected floodplain. After settlement, levees were built, and mining operations took hold. In 1996, a 500-year record breaking flood destroyed the levee and changed the course of the river from a historical spawning reach to the abandoned mining gravel pits, known as the Ridgefield Pits. The river continues its path through the Ridgefield Pits where waters are warm and juvenile salmon do not have habitat to seek refuge from predators. In 2009 the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board (LCFRB) identified the Ridgefield Pits as a high priority project. Grant funding from the SRFB for this project totals almost \$8 million, although the project was at-risk of losing \$7 million in SRFB funding when the Senate proposed to transfer supplemental funding. Thankfully, the proposal did not move forward, and the Partnership can continue on schedule with additional funding from NOAA, Washington Department of Ecology, and the LCFRB Small Grants Program, to complete the project in 2 years.



A publication of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

Northwest Treaty Tribes

Protecting Natural Resources for Everyone

Spring 2025

nwtreatytribes.org

Inside:

- Event celebrates all things cockle
- Tribes take new look at Dungeness crab populations
- Chum, steelhead support winter harvest
- Hatchery upgrades underway
- Partners collaborate on culvert projects

Youth are tomorrow's salmon stewards

by Ed Johnstone
NWIFC Chairman

As tribal leaders, we are looking ahead to the next seven generations of environmental stewards to protect salmon, shellfish, wildlife and plant resources.

It is our responsibility to provide young leaders with the tools to care for the natural resources our ancestors worked so hard to protect.

As part of the federal trust responsibility to uphold tribal treaty rights, the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission has partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to create a workforce development workgroup to help guide tribal members into careers in environmental stewardship.

"Our objective is to support tribal youth to go into fishing, conservation management and science careers," said Dan Tonnes, workforce development specialist for the NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region at the time the partnership was formed. "The very experienced tribal folks are retiring and looking for younger tribal members to take their place, but we need to connect them with the educational and career pathways to take advantage of these opportunities."

In partnership with the Tulalip Tribes, the workgroup organized the first Native Youth Salmon Summit in October, bringing together nearly 70 students to celebrate salmon culture and learn about careers in salmon conservation and recovery.

A highlight of this summit was a job fair where representatives from nearly 50 colleges, government agencies and nonprofits connected with students, showing a wide variety of career options.

The aim of the workgroup is not to create a career pipeline, but instead a braided river with many pathways, including careers in tribal natural resources departments.

We're bringing together representatives from tribes, weaving a network to share successes and expand programs that provide tribal members opportunities to work for their own communities.

Across the region, tribes are working to train the next generation of environmental stewards.



The Nisqually Indian Tribe partnered with Northwest Trek Wildlife Park to create a nature engagement fellowship. As the first fellow, Nisqually elder Rose Wells mentored tribal youth at the park, teaching them about potential careers working in nature.

Taholah High School students worked side by side with the Quinault Indian Nation to collect data and trap invasive European green crab. The students' work filled a budgetary gap in response to the state's declaration of emergency in Grays Harbor.

At Neah Bay High School, Makah tribal students operate their own fish hatchery. In addition to giving the students hands-on experience, the hatchery program has been integrated into lessons in social studies, English, science and media classes.

It's rewarding to see our students energized by these programs.

"We are all connected through salmon, and we all need to do our part to support salmon and each other," one student said of their key takeaway from the Native Youth Salmon Summit at Tulalip.

Another said the most rewarding part of the summit was "engaging with Indigenous leaders and hearing that their perspectives and knowledge are being celebrated and intertwined with modern ways."

We look forward to more educational partnerships. We're counting on the next generation to continue the work of managing our treaty-protected resources. That means staffing hatcheries, habitat restoration crews, data-gathering teams and other natural resources management positions.

If we can get our youth involved in this battle, we can gain momentum.



Northwest Treaty Tribes
Protecting Natural Resources For Everyone

**Northwest Indian
Fisheries Commission**
6730 Martin Way E.
Olympia, WA 98516
(360) 438-1180

Northwest Treaty Tribes is a quarterly publication of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. Free subscriptions are available. This edition is online at nwtreatytribes.org. Articles in *Northwest Treaty Tribes* may be reprinted.

NWIFC Chairs Emeriti
Billy Frank Jr.
Lorraine Loomis

Executive Director
Justin Parker

**Communication Services
Division Manager**
Kari Neumeyer

Regional Information Officers
Kimberly Cauvel
Trevor Pyle
Tiffany Royal

NWIFC Member Tribes: Hoh, Jamestown S'Klallam, Lower Elwha Klallam, Lummi Nation, Makah, Muckleshoot, Nisqually, Nooksack, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Puyallup, Quileute, Quinault Indian Nation, Sauk-Suiattle, Skokomish, Squaxin Island, Stillaguamish, Suquamish, Swinomish, Tulalip and Upper Skagit

Tribal contact information is available under Member Tribes at nwtreatytribes.org.

Follow us:
@nwtreatytribes on Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X and Bluesky, and @NorthwestTreatyTribes on LinkedIn and YouTube

On the cover:
Port Gamble S'Klallam fishermen Brad Abad, left, and Tyler Sullivan prepare to deploy a crab pot into Puget Sound. See story on page 11.
Tiffany Royal

Tribe embraces collaborative approach for fish passage



Clockwise from left: A culvert that blocked fish passage is removed from Haberzette Dam in 2021. Juvenile chinook are found during monitoring after construction. Fish are now unencumbered in the stream as it flows beneath a new bridge. *Tulalip Tribes (3)*

The Tulalip Tribes are prepared this year to pull metal piping known as culverts from beneath roadways to improve the flow of streams—and the ability of salmon to reach habitat in those waterways—at several locations across their traditional homelands.

Efforts to replace undersized, poorly placed or otherwise ineffective culverts with larger pass-through structures like bridges have been underway for years throughout Washington state.

Fisheries managers agree that the momentum must continue in order to improve the odds that Northwest salmon populations will recover and thrive in the future. The fish need access to habitat where adults can spawn and young can grow—and they can all contribute to the recovery of their species across generations.

Fixing fish blockages beneath state-managed roadways also is legally mandated under a federal court injunction that acknowledged that tribes' treaty right to harvest salmon is dependent on sustainable populations of fish supported by adequate habitat.

But tribes aren't stopping there.

The Tulalip Tribes have catalogued hundreds more culverts that fully or partially block fish passage under non-state roadways, meaning they are tucked under county roads, city streets, forest roads, railroad crossings and private drives. All of these can pose roadblocks to salmon migrating from their natal streams to sea and back again to spawn.

"There's a lot of work to be done," said Brett Shattuck, the restoration, acquisition and stewardship program manager for Tulalip.

To break down these fish barriers, Tulalip is working closely with the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), which is responsible for the state-owned culverts beneath highways and interstates, as well as forming partnerships with a wide variety of stakeholders including Snohomish County, area cities, BNSF Railway, and nonprofits such as Sound Salmon Solutions, Trout Unlimited and Adopt a Stream Foundation.

"It really does take a collaborative approach," Shattuck said.

Each big-ticket project completed by WSDOT improves the odds that tribes like Tulalip and other organizations can secure funding for other projects needed nearby.

"It facilitates lighting a fire," Shattuck said. "Any and all of these projects are really important by themselves for fish passage, but combining them with WSDOT projects really increases the benefit, to make habitat connectivity happen."

Coordination is key for habitat connectivity

On an unnamed tributary to the Snoqualmie River, the Tulalip Tribes in 2021 removed a barrier to fish passage known as the Haberzette Dam. The earthen dam near Carnation held a culvert 4 feet above the water level, fully blocking fish from getting upstream.

Removal of the dam opened fish habitat that had been inaccessible for 80 years. Six months after construction, Tulalip biologists documented Endangered Species Act-listed juvenile chinook salmon upstream.

"Every mile counts," said Natasha Coumou, restoration ecologist for Tulalip. "The fish can't wait."

Tulalip planned the project in coordination with private landowners, as well as a WSDOT project where the stream intersects with Highway 203. The state's project is expected to wrap up this year.

The way these two projects are extending a runway of habitat shows the power of working together, Shattuck said.

Encouraged by the value and success of coordinated fish barrier removal at Haberzette Dam and other sites, Tulalip has developed an approach to build more partnerships, combine areas of expertise and qualify for more project funding.

This year, Tulalip is leading the replacement of five privately owned fish barriers and is working with BNSF and Snohomish County on seven others. —*Kimberly Cauvel*



Left: Nisqually Indian Tribe chief enhancement biologist Bill St. Jean describes changes in an upgraded egg storage room at Kalama Creek Hatchery.

Above: Juvenile salmon are fed in new circular tanks at the hatchery. *Trevor Pyle (2)*

Hatchery gets suite of upgrades

Hatchery upgrades that the Nisqually Indian Tribe has sought for nearly a decade are well underway, promising to make Kalama Creek Hatchery a more efficient and expansive home for eggs and juvenile salmon.

A combination of state and federal sources funded the upgrades.

The hatchery now boasts a system that can filter water down to 50 microns—the smallest size of debris that can be seen

with the naked eye. But that's just the beginning of the improvements to the facility.

A new type of pump allows the tribe to use water more efficiently. The facility also features a new abatement pond to remove pollutants from discharge water, and an incubation room capable of holding 1 million eggs.

There are even fish on the walls, as tribal member Kyle Sanchez added a mural to

the interior.

A second phase of upgrades—if funded and completed—could boost Kalama Creek's ability to spawn adult salmon.

The hatchery was built to grow native stocks of chinook, coho and chum and discontinue use of stocks from outside areas. Upgrades will increase fish survival by supporting genetically robust populations. —*Trevor Pyle*

SEVEN GENERATIONS

The Nisqually Indian Tribe marked Chief Leschi's Jan. 29 birthday with his relatives sharing details about his life and love for horsemanship as members of the tribe's Medicine River Ranch offered rides on horses.

"He was a uniter. He brought people together," said Larry Seaberg, Nisqually Indian Tribe elder and direct descendant of Chief Leschi.

Cynthia Iyall, also a descendant of Chief Leschi, shared how Leschi refused to sign an unfair treaty with Territorial Gov. Isaac Stevens. She also spoke about the false accusations that led to Leschi's execution and his later exoneration by a special historical court. *Trevor Pyle*





Above: Puyallup Tribe of Indians fisheries enhancement chief Blake Smith inspects vertical turbine pumps, a new addition to the tribe's Clarks Creek Hatchery. *Trevor Pyle*

BIA funding supports hatchery updates

Updates to the Puyallup Tribe of Indians' Clarks Creek Hatchery will boost the tribe's mission to raise and protect salmon.

A grant from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and funding from the state made the upgrades possible.

With the improvements, automatic crowders will lift salmon out of the ponds onto sorting tables, limiting the number of times staffers have to

handle the fish. A new abatement pond that drains through the bottom will be more efficient, freeing staff from having to empty out silt and other materials throughout the year.

New electronics, variable speed drives, and five new vertical turbine pumps will modernize the hatchery further. New flow meters will measure water use. New cement walkways between raceways will be

easier to maintain.

"It's definitely a major upgrade," said Blake Smith, the tribe's fisheries enhancement chief.

Another change: trees around the acclimation ponds were logged so the tribe could add fencing and netting to protect against blue herons.

"There are two rookeries nearby," Smith said. "They'd sit on the buildings and wait for us to leave for the day so they could eat (the fish)."

The work began last spring and is ongoing.

Clarks Creek isn't the only Puyallup facility to see improvements. The tribe's Wilkeson Creek Hatchery purchased an air burst system similar to one at Clarks Creek that blows sand and debris from grating to ensure adequate flow to the fish in rearing ponds during high water events. —*Trevor Pyle*

"It's definitely a major upgrade."

Blake Smith
Fisheries Enhancement Chief
Puyallup Tribe of Indians

Makah celebrates Billy Frank Jr. statue



A 4-foot model of the Billy Frank Jr. statue destined for the halls of Congress continued its tour around the state this winter, making a stop at the Makah Cultural and Research Center (MCRC) in Neah Bay in February and March.

Clockwise from top left: Makah Tribe Chairman Timothy "TJ" Greene Sr. speaks during a ceremony where the tribe unveiled the model statue. Neah Bay Middle School 8th grader Amillia Corpuz gazes at the model statue while 8th grader Timothy Secor looks over literature about the project. Makah Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Rebekah Monette takes a photo of MCRC board president Meredith Parker with granddaughter, Colleen Parker, middle, and friend Aaliyah Reel, in front of the model statue. *Tiffany Royal (3)*





Above: The remains of an old Interstate 90 pontoon that had been sitting in Neah Bay since the early 1990s was extracted last fall through a debris and derelict vessel removal project by the Makah Tribe and National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

Below: As part of the derelict vessel removal project, a crane aboard a barge removes a derelict vessel from Neah Bay. *Makah Tribe (2)*

Tribe removes derelict structures from Neah Bay



A steel and concrete pontoon from Interstate 90 that had been sitting in Neah Bay for nearly 40 years has finally been removed.

The Makah Tribe, in partnership with the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Debris Program, removed the pontoon from the bay, plus 15 derelict vessels from the Makah Marina, last fall. The multi-million-dollar effort was funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

"Removing this debris not only revitalizes our marina and preserves our environment but also strengthens the cultural and economic pillars of our community," said Makah Chairman Timothy "TJ" Greene Sr. "This effort demonstrates the impact of partnerships rooted in respect for our natural resources and shared commitment to sustaining our way

of life for future generations."

Initially, the tribe purchased several of the old pontoons that had sunk into Lake Washington in 1990 to help build the tribe's marina and breakwater, but they were never used for their intended purpose, said Carol Reamer, the Port of Neah Bay director. Two were eventually sold, leaving the one that was recently removed.

Prior to last year's work, the tribe had removed eight boats—and there is still more to be done, Reamer said. The tribe's old fish dock and Hi-Tide barge will be removed, and the adjacent beach will be restored.

"This is an extreme financial burden to the tribe," Reamer said. "It's costly to remove vessels when the owner walks away. One boat that was purchased for \$15,000 cost the tribe \$67,000 to remove."

—Tiffany Royal

Chum fishery makes comeback for Nisqually Tribe

Nisqually Indian Tribe citizens fished for chum salmon this winter thanks to a robust return of the species to the Nisqually watershed.

Fishers braved brisk winter temperatures, thrilled to be out for the tribe's first winter chum fishery since 2017. Three fisheries were held across December and January, with tribal fishers catching more than 2,000 chum.

This year's escapement—the number of fish that return to their spawning grounds—exceeded 90,000, which places it among the top four in the last 40 years.

Nisqually fisherman Willy Squally, who participated with his son in this year's fishery, said getting on the water to fish for this run is deeply rewarding.

"It's knowing what we are doing to manage is helping make sure this run is there for our kids," Squally said. "If we don't have anything, they don't have anything."

The return is the result of years of careful management, said Craig Smith, finfish harvest manager for the tribe, with fisherman and elder Rueben Wells Sr. advocating to

restrict preterminal fisheries aimed at fall chum, arguing that they were catching winter chum as well. Genetic testing and other data proved Wells Sr. correct.

"Driven by Rueben Wells Sr.'s persistence to protect winter chum from outside fisheries, we have worked really hard for over a decade to get better

management on chum fishing before they get to the river," Smith said. "It's this combination of conservative management meeting the opportunity of great ocean conditions."

Most of this year's spawning took place on the Nisqually River's mainstem. Fortunately there weren't rain or snow events to wipe out the redds,

or egg nests, Smith said.

This year's return will provide useful data for the future, too. The tribe collected 600 scale samples, which will yield data about the brood's productivity.

Some of that data indicates a positive outlook for next year's chum return, Smith said.

—Trevor Pyle



“We have worked really hard for over a decade to get better management on chum fishing.”

Craig Smith
Finfish Harvest Manager
Nisqually Indian Tribe

Above: Nisqually tribal fisherman John Scott returns to the riverbank after pulling in several chum salmon during the tribe's first winter chum fishery since 2017.

Left: Scott cleans his catch. Trevor Pyle (2)

Skagit steelhead bring winter treaty harvest

Winter steelhead returning to the Skagit River watershed to spawn this year will support treaty fishing opportunities for the third year in a row.

These steelhead were an invaluable winter food source for tribes along the Skagit and Sauk rivers historically, and remain an important source of cultural sustenance today.

The local steelhead run is part of the Puget Sound population that is listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act.

When 4,000 or fewer fish are forecast to return, tribal fishers from the Upper Skagit, Swinomish and Sauk-Suiattle tribes—as well as catch-and-release anglers overseen by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)—abstain from fishing.

About 7,000 steelhead are forecast to return this year.

“There is a slight uptick in the forecast for winter steelhead, which on a positive note will provide harvestable fish for the state and tribes on the Skagit this year,” said Scott Schuyler, a tribal fisherman and the natural resources policy representative of the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe.

Fishing is set to take place from February into April, and the tribes and state will coordinate monitoring to ensure the



Above: Upper Skagit Indian Tribe natural resources staff conduct a test fishery before harvest each year, pictured in March 2023.

Below: A steelhead is wrestled onto the tribe's research boat. *Kimberly Cauvel (2)*

run is sustainable.

“Rebuilding the steelhead runs has been, and will continue to be, a priority for the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe,” Schuyler said.

For its part, the tribe conducts a test fishery, gathering data at various locations in the river including the number of fish caught, the size of each fish and whether they have spawned.

In 2024, the co-managers forecast that 5,215 wild steelhead might return to the Skagit. By the end of the run, about 7,300 fish had returned—the largest return

recorded since 2016 according to WDFW data.

In 2023, a forecast of 5,211 steelhead were projected to return to the watershed. About 6,700 completed the journey according to monitoring efforts.

Steelhead returns were stronger prior to the closure of a state hatchery program a decade ago, after which opportunities for treaty harvest declined. Because of habitat loss and degradation, hatcheries are critical in most Northwest rivers to sustain salmon and steelhead populations.

—*Kimberly Cauvel*





Left: Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe environmental biologist Neil Harrington pulls a light trap from Sequim Bay in 2021.

Above: Skokomish Tribe lead shellfish biologist Blair Paul, left, shellfish biologist Andy Pavones and shellfish technician Kevin Cagey inspect light trap contents in Hood Canal in 2019. *Tiffany Royal (2)*

Science partnership benefits Dungeness crab

Treaty tribes and their partners in the Pacific Northwest Crab Research Group (PCRG) want more than data out of their research—they want to see how a collaborative approach to collecting data can help co-manage fisheries.

A paper published recently by the American Fisheries Society explores how PCRG’s collaboration methods, including multiple partners collecting data and strengthening those relationships, can support managing the Dungeness crab population that has been increasingly relied upon by harvesters since finfish populations have declined.

The PCRG includes tribal, state and federal governments, nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions and local communities. It works to produce standardized biological data sets on Dungeness crab throughout the region, said Emily Buckner, lead author of the study and one of the program coordinators.

While harvests have been closely monitored and population surveys conducted for decades, fisheries co-managers still don’t have a complete picture of the crab life history, such as larval movement patterns, genetic population structure, and environmental influences on a crab’s life stages, Buckner said.

Dungeness crab are important to the

tribes as a traditional food as well as an economic source for tribal fishers. However, the population is challenging to manage because of data gaps throughout the Salish Sea. Information collected from samples of tiny crab larvae, known as megalopae, could help co-managers better understand stressors to the population, such as overfishing and changing climate and ocean conditions.

“This collaborative effort demonstrated that the PCRG’s structure is effective for developing robust research projects that address data gaps for this population,” Buckner said.

The primary data collection method has been using light traps—a five-gallon bucket-sized floating device that uses light to attract and trap crab larvae—set out 1-2 days at a time April through September, typically off piers and docks.

Participants started setting out light traps in 2019, from as far north as Heriot Bay on Vancouver Island, B.C., to Zittle’s Marina in Olympia. In 2023, 42 light traps were set, collecting data and contributing to the database.

“From PCRG’s inception in 2018, we have seen the value in collaboration to collect data across the Salish Sea on this important species,” said Neil Harrington, environmental biologist for the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe and a member of the

coordinating committee of PCRG. “No one entity could collect this powerful of a data set that is giving us a better understanding of the distribution and timing of early life stages of Dungeness crab.”

From the data collected, it has been observed that the abundance of larval crab caught within the light trap network has varied by location and year. The highest annual abundance was found consistently in the central Salish Sea (north Puget Sound, San Juan Islands, Whidbey Island and northeast Olympic Peninsula) and northern Hood Canal, with the lowest abundance in the southern Salish Sea and southern Hood Canal.

Larger larvae showed up in April and May (about 1/3 inch like a small jewelry bead), with progressively smaller megalopae arriving in subsequent months (about 1/4-inch).

The Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe is slated to conduct additional research through the PCRG adult crab workgroup, Harrington said, to develop a unified survey that will provide baseline population data independent from the commercial fishery, and can be linked to the larval crab data. It is hoped this will give Dungeness crab managers improved capacity to predict future catch and better safeguard the fishery. —*Tiffany Royal*

Tribe, fishers team up to collect data

The Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe’s fishers and scientists are working together to better manage Dungeness crab for tribal harvest.

Working side by side conducting crab surveys this winter, both brought their expertise to the water within Admiralty Inlet that is part of the tribe’s usual and accustomed fishing area.

The tribe has seen its annual crab harvest quota fluctuate from 800,000 pounds in 2012 to 275,000 pounds in 2024, said Courtney Hart, the tribe’s crustacean manager.

“We know very little about these fluctuations and expect that they range throughout the management areas and hope this research will help us figure it out,” she said.

In partnership with the regional Pacific Northwest Crab Research Group (PCRG), the tribe and shellfish scientists want a better idea of the crab population sizes and location to improve management in this specific region.

In addition to using a random sampling method developed by the state, the tribe’s fishers are guiding the work with their knowledge of where currents are too strong to set pots and places where crab are scarce.

“I like to go with the fishermen because they know what they’re doing,” Hart said. “How we’re collecting the data is an exact mimic of their job as fishermen.”

Using 30 commercial grade crab pots with secured escape rings, pots are dropped at various depths in the water column—shallow, mid and deep—because crab move between these depths depending on life stages such as molting, spawning and migrating.

After the crab pots are left to soak overnight, data is collected from trapped males and females before they are released back into the inlet. The tribe plans to do another round of data collection this summer.

In addition to conducting the biomass survey, Hart hopes to establish at least two index sites where the tribe can conduct annual test fisheries, something that tribal fishers have wanted.

“There are test fisheries for crab throughout Puget Sound but they do not cover all the areas,” she said.

The state tests four spots near Port Townsend for this specific region, and the tribe wants to expand the sampling area. This will support the tribe’s understanding of a fishery that’s vital to many tribal members, Hart said.

This project was supported by funding from the Washington Department of Commerce’s Tribal Climate Resilience Grant, which enables the tribe to pay the fishers for their time on the water, Hart said.

—Tiffany Royal



Above: PCRG program co-manager Emily Buckner, left, tribal fishermen Tyler Sullivan and Brad Abad, and Port Gamble S’Klallam crustacean manager Courtney Hart unload crab from a pot for data collection. *Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe*

Below: Hart, right, and Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe shellfish biologist Emma Saas review locations for setting crab pots. *Tiffany Royal*



Celebrating the cockle

When Suquamish tribal member Robin Little Wing Sigo created a post on social media in 2016 about her favorite food—cockles—her friend and Suquamish shellfish biologist Elizabeth Unsell took note.

She shared it with colleague Ryan Crim, the hatchery manager for the Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF), who, being a “yes” guy, said PSRF might be able to grow some cockle seed for Suquamish.

While cockles do not travel well or have a long shelf life—and thus are not popular on the commercial market—the Suquamish Tribe holds a deep connection to the bivalve. However, there has been a significant decline in the population over the past few decades, witnessed by elders and documented by tribal employees.

Tribal elder Jay Mills grew up in the 1960s and ’70s off Phinney Bay in Bremer-ton, where he was fortunate to live off his family’s harvest from the Salish Sea.

Cockles were sacred as a food source to the tribe, because they were abundant then, but now it’s nearly lost, he said.

Mills, together with Unsell, Sigo and the tribe’s shellfish department, asked tribal council for funding to help rebuild the cockle population to a sustainable level for tribal subsistence harvest.

In February, the tribe, PSRF and Washington Sea Grant hosted scientists and tribal members from Washington state, Alaska, British Columbia and Parks Canada for a two-day gathering, “Celebrate the Cockle: Weaving Together Tradition and Science,” sharing what they’ve learned over the past seven years, including from other tribes working with the shellfish species.

The partnership yielded many discoveries, including successful hatchery programs, outplanting methods on beaches, genetics, a bivalve cancer in a local population, the effects of ocean acidification, and cockles’ ability to thrive in unexpected places, such as on geoduck farms.

“It’d been hard to find wild cockles in the Salish Sea but go to a geoduck farm and there can be lots there,” said Emily Buckner, PSRF’s crab program manager.

This year, the tribe and PSRF are look-



During the Celebrate the Cockle conference, Suquamish Tribe elder Jay Mills taught participants how to can smoked shellfish.

Below: Port Gamble S’Klallam tribal member Angelina Sosa helps prepare clams for canning. *Tiffany Royal (2)*

ing at outplanting strategies by experimenting with planting cockle seeds in geoduck tubes.

At the event, Suquamish tribal members shared memories about growing up harvesting cockles and the importance of sharing that with younger generations.

“My three older kids knew how to grab them and chew on the sweet part,” said Azure Boure, the tribe’s traditional food and medicine program coordinator. “But my three younger kids didn’t know what they were.”

While tribal members traditionally were not farmers who tended to rows of crops, she said, they cared for marine areas that provided traditional foods, to make sure there was an abundance.

“It was really important for me that my family knows how important this food was for our ancestors and the work it takes to get it back,” Boure said.

—*Tiffany Royal*





New books offer cultural teachings

The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community's Department of Environmental Protection has recently published a collection of children's books, each one featuring a traditional story about first foods integral to Northwest tribal culture.

The books chronicle the journey of salmon, the growth and harvest cycle of camas, and the folly of picking salmonberries before they are ripe.

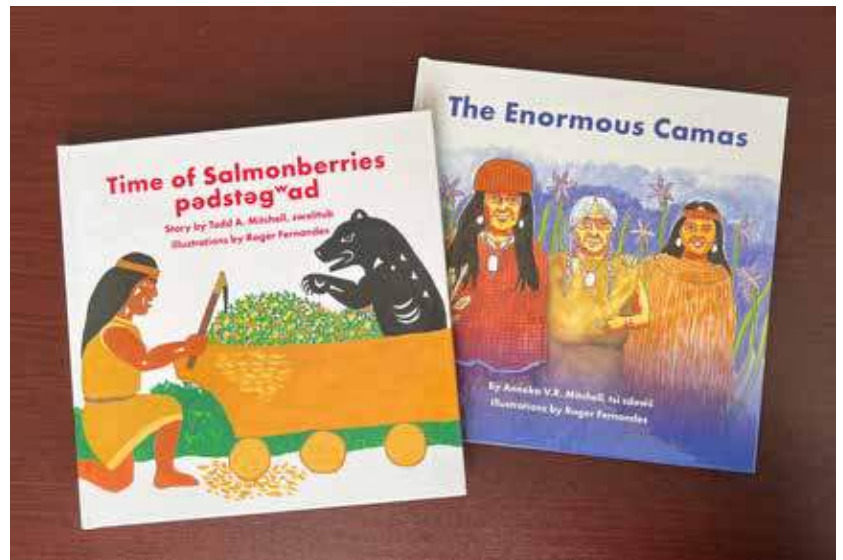
"We want to make the science and natural resources work we do accessible to our tribal youth, the next generation of stewards," said Todd A. Mitchell, *swəɫtub*, author of one of the books. "These books provide a link to our environment, past knowledge, traditions of storytelling and our culture."

Mitchell, a Swinomish tribal citizen and director of the Department of Environmental Protection, wrote the book *Time of Salmonberries*. The other two books were written by his relatives: *The Enormous Camas* by his daughter Anneka Mitchell, and *First Salmon Ceremony* by his late father Raymond Mitchell.

The stories are illustrated by tribal artists Jeanette Quintasket of Swinomish and Roger Fernandes of Lower Elwha Klallam.

Swinomish gifted copies of the books to its membership during December 2024 holiday distributions. Remaining copies of the books are available for purchase by email request to dep@swinomish.nsn.us.

—Kimberly Cauvel



Top: Art from the book *First Salmon Ceremony*, illustrated by Swinomish citizen Jeanette Quintasket, depicts the cultural practice of returning the first harvested salmon back to the water.

Above: Children's books produced by the Swinomish Department of Environmental Protection showcase traditional knowledge about salmonberries, camas and other resources alongside tribal art and with the tribe's traditional language woven in.

Solar power, EVs introduced at tribal facilities



As part of a Climate Commitment Act-funded project, the Squaxin Island Tribe installed solar panels on its natural resources building and two other tribally owned buildings. *Photo by Noah Wine of SkyArk Media*

The Squaxin Island Tribe is reducing its carbon footprint with solar panels that support tribal sovereignty while reducing the power bills.

Thanks to funding through the state's Climate Commitment Act (CCA)—which auctions emission allowances and puts the resulting funds toward climate adaptation or mitigation projects—the tribe has embarked on a series of solar power projects to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels.

Solar panels have been installed on two tribally owned buildings in Shelton: the Squaxin Island natural resources building and tribal administration building, with a total of 300 panels between the two. The tribe's Tumwater Trading Post business is slated to get 76 solar panels.

Funds from the CCA covered the cost of the solar panels and labor at \$517,095.

The use of solar panels is expected to reduce the tribe's depen-

dence on the larger power grid, reduce energy bills and be another tool in its mission to battle climate change.

The efforts are paying off already with the natural resources building seeing a 39% reduction in its power bill and the tribal headquarters seeing a 34% reduction.

All three projects are expected to produce 192,088 kilowatts of energy per hour.

"It's our first step into solar and it's exciting," said Leila Whitener, a brownfields coordinator and resource biologist with the tribe who helped coordinate the project. Installation of the panels on the Shelton properties began in August and were completed in October.

Whitener said the CCA—which Washington state voters preserved in 2024, rejecting an initiative to end it—also will fund tools to measure climate impacts of future projects. The solar initiative was seen as a perfect complement to the tribe's climate efforts.

"Clean energy fit in perfectly," she said.

The tribe also has purchased two electric vehicles, including a Chevrolet Blazer for natural resources staff and a Chevrolet Silverado to tow boats. The tribe installed an electronic-vehicle charging station in the natural resources department parking lot, which is available for community use.

South Sound Solar, Inc., was the project's contractor for the solar panels and charging station.

The tribe is on the lookout for more opportunities to incorporate solar power, Whitener said. —*Trevor Pyle*

“It’s our first step into solar and it’s exciting.”

Leila Whitener,
Resource Biologist
Squaxin Island Tribe

WALKING ON

Jim Gibson



Jim Gibson died at the age of 79 in February. For more than four decades, Gibson worked tirelessly as a fisheries biologist to develop, implement and support treaty fisheries.

He joined the Skagit System Cooperative (now known as the Skagit River System Cooperative) in 1979 as a fisheries biologist, marking the start of his tenure in fisheries co-management. Gibson transitioned to a shellfish biologist position in 1995, where his leadership played a crucial role in advancing shellfish programs. In 2003, he became the shellfish coordinating biologist for the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, a role he held until his retirement in 2018.

Throughout his career, Gibson led projects that shaped the future of fisheries management in Washington. In

the early 1980s, he was involved in the pioneering Skagit River spring chinook radio tagging studies. His work in the 1980s on a Skagit coho escapement study helped advance salmon tagging and beach seining methods, improving data collection and management efforts.

Gibson also was instrumental in the early implementation of the Rafeedie Decision for the tribe, working closely with tribal leader Lorraine Loomis to ensure these reaffirmed treaty rights were realized for the Swinomish people. Gibson worked to expand Swinomish Fisheries into a department that integrated science with policy and management decisions, ensuring sustainable practices for future generations. He guided Swinomish through the development of multiple fisheries, including crab, shrimp, geoduck, sea cucumber, sea urchin and intertidal clams.

Gibson's unassuming demeanor, respect for others, kindness and levelheaded approach to co-management set an example for all who had the privilege to work alongside him.

Christian Morganroth III



Christian Du-wa-soob Eugene Morganroth III, a Quileute tribal member and former member of the Quileute Tribal Council, passed away in November. He was 85.

His grandmother spoke only Quileute, contributing to his exposure and fluency in the language.

He served several terms on tribal council and the Quileute Natural Resources (Fish) Committee. He worked to get clean water for the reservation and spent years helping to get land for the Quileute Tribal School to move out of the tsunami zone. He also traveled to Washington, D.C., many times to advocate for his tribe.

Morganroth served as fisheries director for his tribe in the late 1970s, and participated in the signing of an agreement with Gov. Christine Gregoire and four other tribes to create the Olympic Coast Intergovernmental Policy Council. He later served as vice chairman of the Southern Panel of the Pacific Salmon Commission.

Morganroth also worked at the Quileute Tribal School for years, teaching the Quileute language, carving, culture and science. He was one of the few Quileute elders who spoke the language fluently,

Morganroth is survived by his wife of 54 years, Arlene (Kitselman) Morganroth; children Chris Morganroth IV, Charlene (Greg) Meneely, Priscilla (Travis) Lorentzen and Amanda (Robert) Knight; 11 grandchildren; six great grandchildren; and siblings Lela Mae Morganroth, Marilyn Morganroth and Dixie Morganroth.

Mike Taylor



Michael "Mike" Taylor, longtime attorney of the Tulalip Tribes, died in February. He was 81.

He was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather, whose impact on the legal rights of Native American people and the strength of tribal governance will be felt for generations.

For over 50 years, Taylor applied his exceptional legal skills in support of tribal nations, including on the legal team for treaty tribes in *U.S. v. Washington*. He has said that helping secure the Boldt decision was the proudest achievement of his career.

A 1969 graduate of the University of California Davis, Taylor entered the legal profession during a pivotal time, becoming an early advocate for tribal governments as an attorney at the Volunteers in Service to America Reservation Indian Project.

He went on to work as an attorney and judge throughout his career for the Colville Confederated Tribes, Quinault Nation, and Tulalip Tribes; the San Manuel Band of Serrano Indians in California; the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw tribes in Oregon; and the Lower Sioux in Minnesota.

In recognition of his exceptional leadership in the quest for equal justice in Washington, Taylor received the Goldmark Award in 1993. He also received the Northwest Indian Bar Association Lifetime Achievement Award in 2013.

Taylor called upholding the rights of treaty tribes a "very rewarding" mission to which he dedicated his life. He also worked to empower tribal members to take leadership roles in the legal field, and his legacy includes mentorship to many who now serve as attorneys across Indian Country.

Taylor's wife of 64 years, Doris, preceded him in death in October. They are survived by their daughter Meghan and grandson Desmond, as well as eight foreign exchange students they welcomed into their lives and family.



Taking root along the river

Mike McHenry, fisheries habitat biologist for the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, plants a bigleaf maple on one of the engineered logjams in the Ranney reach of the Elwha River that was installed last summer near the state's salmon hatchery.

During February and March, tribal staff planted native vegetation around the logjams, including 2,000 rooted plants of 23 different species, 1,000 live-staked plants of two species, and 4 pounds of seed of seven species. *Tiffany Royal (2)*





THE REDD

Dedicated to Restoring Salmon for Future Generations



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 3 Of Freshwater Mussels & Man
- 3 Community Connection
- 4 Jim Johnson Memorial
- 4 What Are We Reading?
- 5 Volunteer of the year
- 7 Education Fundraising
- 8 Earth Day

Salmon in the Schools

A Program That Unequivocally Inspires Passion

By Kat Martin, 2024-25 Education Intern

My roots did not start in the Pacific Northwest. I grew up in the desert and lived there for nearly my entire life, in the high desert with not a lot of flora and fauna to go around. When I was a young kid in school, we took field trips to go visit the state courts or planetarium. As soon as I walked out of those doors, I had a newfound fascination with the solar system and an oh-so-invigorating understanding of the state's judicial system. I attribute most of my early passions to the experiences I was exposed to. As an adult, I realized that while those experiences did not take me down the path I am at now in life, what matters is

that it did something to me, as a kid, that I think is more important than anything else. It got me to care, and it

What we give to these kids makes connections and lasting memories far more impactful than one could imagine.

ignited passion.

Now, nearly sixteen years later, I am a part of something bigger that

makes those same kinds of differences. As an education intern with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, I realize that I am a part of the building blocks it takes to inspire that connection and passion to the world around us and the kids we interact with. I have taken the knowledge and passion I have gained through my training and teaching with this organization and I impart it to the children participating in the Salmon in the Schools program. What I have seen, as an educator, has taken me by surprise more times than I can count.

Most of my experiences come from our classroom visits and field trips to

CONTINUED
ON PAGE 3



Kids preparing to release the salmon they've watched grow in their classroom since mid January

REDD: A female salmon uses her tail to dig a nest in the gravel. After she deposits her eggs the male fertilizes them. The female then covers the fertilized eggs and the resulting nest is called a redd.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Pat Stevenson, *President*
Erik Young, *Vice President*
Bob Everitt, *Past President*
Rick Haley, *Treasurer*
Kimberly Cauvel, *Secretary*
Matt Desvoigne
Bill Hebner
Steve Ranten
Dr. Ken Raedeke
Austin Rose
Wayne Watne

STAFF

Alison Studley, *Executive Director*
Yuki Reiss, *Restoration Ecologist*
Lucy DeGrace, *Outreach Manager*
Melody Meyers, *Finance & Operations Manager*
Rebecca Rising, *Riparian Project Manager*
Bengt Miller, *Stewardship Manager*
Holly Henderson, *Communications & Development Coordinator*
Myrriah Crowley, *Habitat Restoration Coordinator*
Muriel Troka, *Restoration Crew Coordinator*
Ben Molenhouse, *Restoration Technician*

Kelly Williams, *AmeriCorps Education Associate*
Devon Bedard, *AmeriCorps Restoration Associate*

CONTACT US

360.336.0172
sfeg@skagitfisheries.org
P.O. Box 2497
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Of Freshwater Mussels & Man

Victor Garcia, Retired Educator, Spawner Survey Volunteer

My name is Victor and I was given the gift of sampling Swede Creek this fall (as a Spawner Survey Volunteer). Recently retired and a lifelong lover of wild fish, these outings on Swede with my partner were eagerly awaited! They helped make my Fall!

From meeting the landowners and sharing their love of fish and the stream that flows through their land to the groups of wintering wood ducks on Pat's pond in the mornings, it only got better. Swede Creek is a fun challenge! Imagine an obstacle course set in a waterslide park and you have the up and over, ducking under and weaving your way through the intact lowland riparian zones of Swede. The many downed alders and cedars provide natural structure and hiding places for migrating fish. The riparian zone was always decorated by a changing palette of mushrooms and freshly gnawed beaver sticks. When the coho were running, the stream held a certain palpable electricity in the air. It was a delight

to see wild coho (we saw no hatchery strays) completing their life cycles as they had done for millennia, on their own! Ravens and pileated woodpeckers called to us and Dippers or Ouzel were seen when the fish were on the redds. As one might expect with any relatively intact local stream, Swede showed off its clean water via extensive beds of freshwater mussels.

But this raised a question: How does a bivalve colonize the upstream reaches of a stream with good current?

Inquiring citizen Scientists needed to know! Apparently, the females brood the tiny young, who are then expelled to find the gills of a fish, clamp on with their shells and hitch a ride! Once they're upstream, they release and start

their adult lives! Check out pnwmussels.org for more information on these incredible creatures.

Happy reading and we'll update you next season, I'll definitely be back!



Victor shows off a vibrant Coho half

A freshwater mussel found in Swede Creek.



Freshwater mussels, like the ones shown in this mussel bed in Swede Creek, are impacted by environmental factors like water quality and pH levels.

various locations in the area. Some kids are familiar with salmon and their importance to the ecosystem. However, some had never even stopped to think about salmon! What we give to these kids makes connections and lasting memories far more impactful than one could imagine. Students learn the salmon life cycles through various presentations and solidify their knowledge through arts and crafts projects like bracelets and other art projects while they follow along with presentations. Better yet, children are

actually far more likely to retain what they learn when they incorporate visuals and art!

I have personally watched kids light up and explode with passion when learning about these salmon. Kids who went from quiet and reserved to excited and vibrant when showing me how much they have learned. As educators, we come in through those doors with nothing to give but the knowledge on our belts and we leave having inspired hundreds of children, over six hundred this academic year, to be exact! I am but a small part of the larger picture in these childrens' lives

and passions. It brings me great joy that I can, even if it is just for a little while, inspire these kids to care. What matters most is that they care. I look forward to seeing how this program develops and unfolds in the years to come. My hope is that it continues to change lives, just as it did mine.



**May 6-7: GiveBIG for
Salmon in the Schools**
(see page 7)

Community Connection and a Fresh Perspective

By Lauren Schwartzenberger, 2024-25 Education Intern

As an Education Intern with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, most of my time is spent helping with outreach, leading activities, and teaching about salmon and watershed health. My usual work involves preparing for lessons, engaging with students, and supporting the education program. However, attending two recent community events—Storming the Sound and Illuminight Winter Walk—gave me the opportunity to step outside my normal routine and experience environmental education from a different perspective.

Mid-January I attended 'Storming the Sound', a conference for environmental educators. While this wasn't my first time attending a professional development event, it was one I truly enjoyed. Throughout the day I was able to attend panels and discussions that expanded my understanding of environmental education and gave me insight into the many different facets of this line of work. It was motivating to hear from experienced educators who have been in the field for years, sharing ideas and strategies to engage students and communities in conservation work. As an intern, I sometimes feel like I'm just getting my footing, so being surrounded by people passionate about

environmental education gave me a fresh perspective on the impact this work can have.

On January 31st, the Skagit Riverwalk Plaza lit up for the 11th annual Illuminight Winter Walk, and I was lucky to be a part of it. This event brought people together to celebrate light, community and the Skagit ecosystem. People carried countless homemade luminaries and created a procession along the river—it was so fun to witness all the creativity and see the riverbank alive with light. For me it was a nice change of pace to engage with people outside of a classroom or formal program setting. I got to see firsthand how art and imagination can be used to spark conversations about nature.

Both Storming the Sound and Illuminight reminded me that environmental education is about more than just classroom lessons—it's about connectedness, community and creativity. These events allowed me to see my role as an intern in a new light, making connections with others who care about conservation and experiencing different ways of engaging people with the environment. Having the opportunity to step outside of my usual routine made me even more excited to keep growing in this field.



Kelly, Lauren, Holly and Devon attend an exceptionally rainy and windy Illuminight Winter Walk on January 31, 2025.

IN MEMORIAM

Celebrating the Legacy of Jim Johnson

We are deeply saddened by the loss of longtime volunteer Jim Johnson.

As a dedicated Board Member, ever present volunteer for tree planting and education programs, and our very first Dick Knight Volunteer of the Year recipient, Jim's impact on our community and the Skagit Valley was immeasurable.

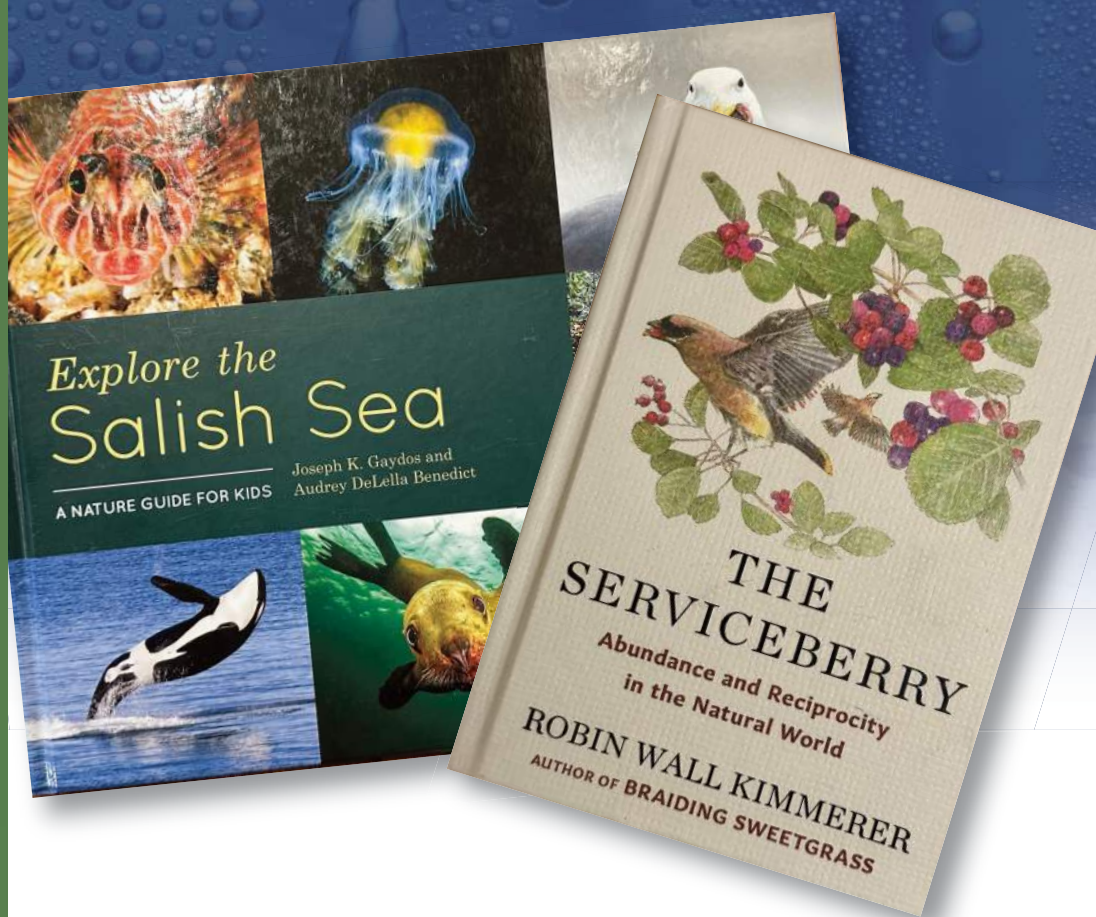
In honor of Jim's incredible dedication to the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and his passion for conservation, we are proud to establish the **Jim Johnson Memorial Fund**. This fund will continue his legacy by supporting the work he cared so deeply about, ensuring his commitment to restoring our watershed lives on through the education and involvement of our young people.



To contribute to the Jim Johnson Memorial Fund please visit SkagitFisheries.org/jim-johnson/ or scan the QR code

What Are We Reading?

By Kala Olson, 2024-2025 Education Intern



The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World by Robin Wall Kimmerer

The latest book from the bestselling author of *Braiding Sweetgrass* is short and full of musings on the lessons of gratitude and community from nature. As a professor of forest ecology and a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Kimmerer's writing combines scientific and indigenous knowledge with beautiful imagery and thoughtful anecdotes. You'll find this book sets both a grounding and uplifting tone for the year!

Explore the Salish Sea: A Nature Guide for Kids by Joseph Gaydos and Audrey DeLella Benedict

SeaDoc Society Science Director Joe Gaydos and Cloud Ridge Naturalists founder and director Audrey DeLella Benedict joined forces to publish this ecology-focused cross between a picture book and chapter book. Younger kids will enjoy the beautiful photos of landscapes and cool animals, and older kids will enjoy the fun facts and calls to action. It's perfect to get your kids or grandkids interested in our local environment!

Both of these books can be purchased at local bookstores all around Western Washington. Our favorite is Village Books in Fairhaven near Bellingham!

Volunteer Spotlight

Tell us about yourself!

A little about me—having been born and raised in Burlington, I have always had a great appreciation of the Skagit River basin. I was able to attend Washington State University and received a degree in Forest Management and had enough soils classes for a minor in soils. My career with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources gave me a number of different opportunities. I really enjoyed the reforestation and plantation maintenance activities that followed timber harvests. Thirty years of my career were in the Forest Practices program which gave me the opportunity to work with small and large forest landowners and gain and share knowledge about the complexities of streams, riparian areas and wetlands. I have always enjoyed the outdoors and fishing is a passion of mine.

How did you first get involved with Skagit Fisheries?

I first got involved with volunteering for Skagit Fisheries nine years ago when I was selected for the board of directors. Starting as a volunteer then was a great way to learn first hand about our programs and the staff that administers them.

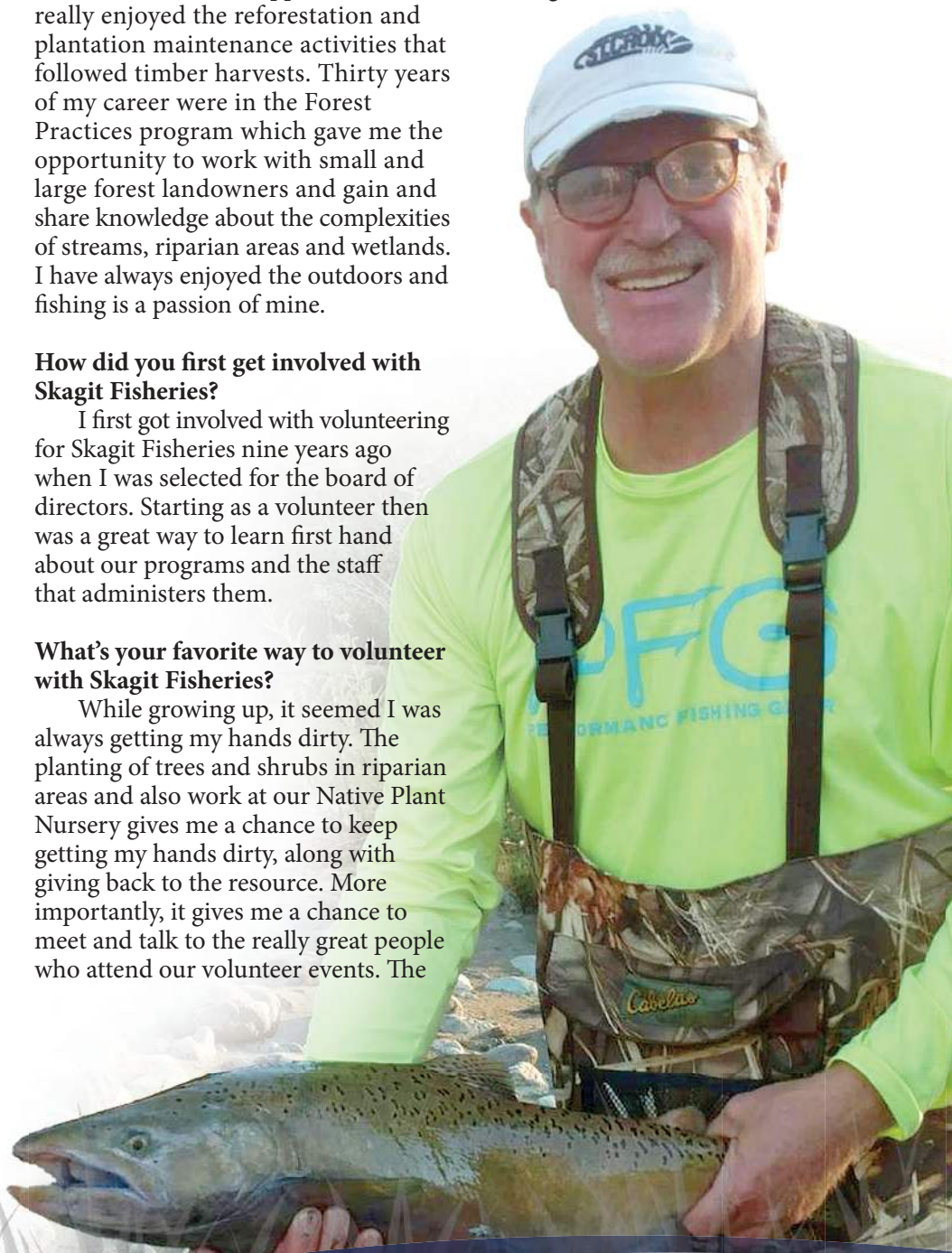
What's your favorite way to volunteer with Skagit Fisheries?

While growing up, it seemed I was always getting my hands dirty. The planting of trees and shrubs in riparian areas and also work at our Native Plant Nursery gives me a chance to keep getting my hands dirty, along with giving back to the resource. More importantly, it gives me a chance to meet and talk to the really great people who attend our volunteer events. The

Salmon in the Schools field trips are also a favorite volunteer event as well.

How has volunteering affected your life?

This is a hard question to answer—to say volunteering has had a beneficial impact in my life is a start. Knowing that we have had a positive impact, especially on the Salmon In the Schools children is priceless, because they can become the next generation of volunteers.



Volunteer of the YEAR

STEVE RANTEN

A Skagit Fisheries Board Member for nearly ten years, Steve was raised in Skagit County and thoroughly enjoys being in the forest, especially when going fishing. Steve has a degree in forestry and works with local landowners to help them understand forestry and riparian impacts. Steve was an active volunteer with Ducks Unlimited for 23 years and loves to utilize his time on the board to share his knowledge of forestry and streams with the Skagit Fisheries community.



To become a
volunteer contact:
360.336.0172

sfeg@skagitfisheries.org
SkagitFisheries.org/volunteer





The Thrill of Hands On Learning Experiences

By Kelly Williams, Washington Service Corps AmeriCorps Education Associate

Imagine this: you are standing on the edge of a roaring river facing the largest rapid you have ever seen and the only way down is on your raft. As you stand there, you make a plan based on the features in front of you. The moment of truth comes when you push off from the river bank and make your way into the rapid.

I often feel similar excitement when I'm out in the field with students in the Salmon in Schools program. We meticulously plan each field trip to ensure its success, but the unknowns are always there – will the weather hold up? How will the kids react to the outdoor adventure? But nothing compares to the thrill of seeing their faces light up when they experience

firsthand the healthy salmon habitat we've discussed in the classroom. Watching them connect the dots is a reminder of how powerful real-world experiences can be.

This academic year, we have reached over 600 students in grades 3 through 6. Our goal is for these students to gain the knowledge and tools needed to go into their communities and educate others about the importance of maintaining a healthy watershed. While the Skagit Valley is surrounded by abundant recreational and outdoor opportunities, many students do not have regular access to these experiences. The Salmon in the Schools program plays a crucial role

in helping these students make the connection between classroom learning and a hands-on appreciation for salmon and the Skagit watershed.

To continue to reach students, funding is needed. For the 2025-26 school year, \$25,000 in grant funds will no longer be available. We are seeking to raise \$25,000 and fill this funding gap so hundreds of students in the Skagit Valley can continue to get excited experiencing the outdoors and learning about salmon. Won't you help us reach this goal before the new school year begins? Visit SkagitFisheries.org/ways-to-give to explore all the ways you can give to Skagit Fisheries and support Salmon in the Schools.

May 6-7: GiveBIG for Salmon in the Schools

(see page 7)



GiveBIG for Salmon in the Schools

GIVE 
BIG

POWERED BY
501 COMMONS

MAY 6-7



To continue to reach students, funding is needed. For the 2025-26 school year, \$25,000 in grant funds will no longer be available. We are seeking to raise \$25,000 and fill this funding gap so hundreds of students in the Skagit Valley can continue to get excited experiencing the outdoors and learning about salmon. Won't you help us reach this goal before the new school year begins?

Donate to help us ensure
Salmon in the Schools can continue.

May 6-7, 2025



www.wagives.org/organization/SkagitFisheries

EXPLORE OTHER WAYS TO GIVE

www.SkagitFisheries.org/ways-to-give



DONATE

Show your commitment to the future stewardship of our local watersheds by making a donation today, or consider a recurring donation.



LEGACY GIVING

Make a lasting impact on the future of Salmon.



GIFTS OF STOCK

Skagit Fisheries accepts donations of stocks, bonds, and mutual funds. These gifts may include significant tax benefits to the donor.



GIFTS OF IRA

Retirement plan assets can be used to make a charitable gift to Skagit Fisheries.



Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.
All contributions are tax deductible to the extent that the law allows. Tax ID#: 94-3165939

www.SkagitFisheries.org



**SKAGIT FISHERIES
ENHANCEMENT
GROUP**

PO Box 2497
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MT. VERNON, WA
PERMIT #26

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

EARTH DAY 2025



**Join Skagit Fisheries and Mount
Vernon Parks and Recreation
for an Earth Day celebration!**

Saturday, April 26th

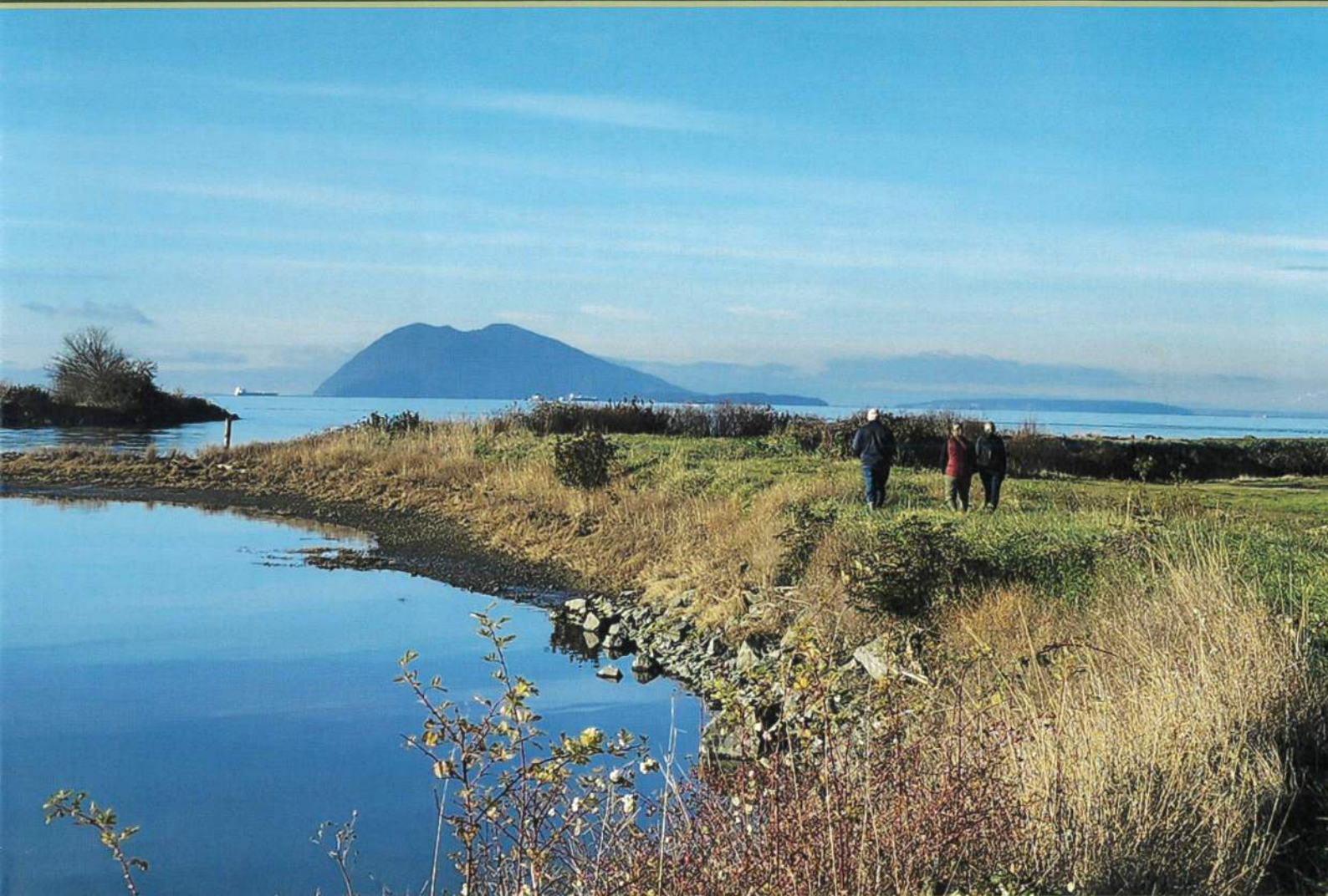
9:00 AM to 1:00 PM at Edgewater Park

**Meet with 10+ local
organizations working to
protect and restore our
natural spaces. All ages
are welcome!**

**Scan the QR code to sign
up to volunteer to plant
native plants and remove
invasive English ivy!**



www.skagitfisheries.org/event/earth-day-2025/



Protecting Habitats and Harvests

Our vibrant farmlands fuel our local economy and preserve the scenic, rural beauty that defines Skagit County. But their value doesn't stop there. These lands also provide critical biodiversity—such as resting and feeding grounds for thousands of waterfowl including the iconic wintering swans and snow geese. Few land types can claim such a unique overlap of supporting our human livelihoods while playing an important ecological role. Our life support system needs both. Finding the right balance between the two isn't always easy, but it's vital.

Skagit Land Trust (SLT or the Trust) has conserved over 1,000 acres of farmland across 13 properties. Our focus is primarily on multi-purpose agricultural lands—the places where farming meets habitat conservation. These lands may host wetlands or sloughs, or they might be farmland that is not ideal for intensive production but is perfect for a mix of agriculture and fish and wildlife habitat. Increasingly, landowners approach us to protect and restore parts of their property for nature—especially as climate change and sea-level rise shift the landscape. The Trust focuses on this niche because Skagit County already has a strong county-run program that purchases development rights to ensure that high-value agricultural land stays in farming, not pavement.

One of Skagit Land Trust's newly protected agricultural properties lies where Edison Slough meets Samish Bay. In the growing season, most of the 120+ acres are farmed. Come winter, the area transforms into a haven for an array of birds, from gleaming trumpeter swans to keen-eyed raptors and plucky plovers. The longtime landowners, who live

Continued on page 3...

Executive Director's Letter to Members

Dear Members and Partners,

At Skagit Land Trust, we are deeply grateful for our volunteers, whose dedication helps us in so many different ways. Among them are our Land Stewards, who commit to assisting in the long-term care of one or more of our conservation areas. These volunteers often form deep connections with the places they watch over.

This year, we are proud to recognize Ron Lindsay and Theresa Connolly (pictured right) with our annual Stewardship Award, which recognized them "for their countless hours committed, in all conditions, actively caring for these and other conservation areas." As stewards of both Kelly's Point on Guemes Island and Hurn Field near Concrete, Ron and Theresa take on a significant commitment, managing these lands frequented by both people and wildlife.



Some land stewards transform the places they steward. Green Road Marsh outside of Burlington is a perfect example. What was once a field overrun with reed canary grass is now a thriving forest, thanks to the tireless work of Kurt and Janice Buchanan (left) and Heidi Nicols (right) before them. Over years of effort — supported by SLT, family, friends,

and volunteers—they oversaw the planting of more than 2,000 trees and the installation of 20 bird boxes, creating a habitat that will flourish for generations.

Another steward whose legacy will long be remembered is Jim Johnson (pictured below), who cared for Cumberland Creek along the Skagit River for nearly 20 years. Jim's unwavering advocacy led to a significant restoration project in the area.



As Michael Kirshenbaum, our Stewardship Director at the time, recalls: "Jim truly loved every moment he spent at Cumberland Creek. The creek had been rerouted and shortened 80 years ago. For years, Jim persistently suggested restoring the creek to its original channel. I always listened but knew funding would be a challenge. Yet Jim kept the idea alive. Then, when Skagit County and the Army Corps sought a mitigation project, I remembered Jim's dream and mentioned Cumberland Creek. The idea took hold, and today, that restoration is a reality—all because of Jim's quiet persistence."

Jim, who passed away this March, once wrote of this re-connection by quoting John Muir: "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." Jim added, "If those 'hitches' grow frayed or worn, then mending and reconnecting them is worthwhile work."

Jim's legacy is a powerful reminder of how one person's passion can shape the land and inspire us all. Thank you to every Land Steward—past and present—who dedicates their time, energy, and love to Skagit Land Trust's conservation areas. Your work is invaluable, and we are honored to share in your journey.

Clockwise: Jim and Michael during the Cumberland Creek restoration project; Jim inspiring the next generation during a school visit to the Utopia Conservation Area.



Continued from page 1...

on the property and lease over 100 acres to a local farming family, approached the Trust with a vision. They wanted to protect their farmland, open space, and 1.4 miles of shoreline forever, while also allowing it to adapt as nature might require due to sea-level rise.

"After five years of discussion with the landowners on how best to preserve this working farmland and wetland habitat, we completed a Conservation Easement (CE) on the property. The landowners love this land and have ensured that it wouldn't be subdivided and further developed," says SLT Conservation Project Manager Kari Odden. The CE was funded by the US Fish & Wildlife Service's National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program and a private foundation.

Over on Fir Island, just half a mile from the north fork of the Skagit River as it spreads across the Skagit Delta, sits the Paul Farm which was recently left to the Trust in a will. Snow geese and trumpeter swans frequent this 26-acre farm, adding to the scenic quality of the valley's landscape. Previous owner Cornelia Paul and her son Leo's fondness for nature and healthy soils influenced the family's decision to donate the land. Above all, they wanted the land protected from anything that they felt would deplete the soil.

Healthy farmland plays an essential role in regulating climate by storing and filtering water and sequestering carbon. The Paul family saw that the longevity of farming as a way of life in the Skagit depends on healthy soil. Thanks to their efforts, the farm still provides great agricultural soil for the current farmer, who leases the land.



A litter of piglets takes an afternoon nap at the Paul Farm

Farther up the Skagit, the Elysium/Birdsview Conservation Easements protect 250 acres of forests and fields, including 115 acres of rich farmland. This area serves as a key wildlife corridor, allowing animals to move freely between the Skagit River ecosystem and the forested foothills. For some animals it is a seasonal stopover; for others, a safe passageway. This corridor ensures that species will not be cut off from these essential needs by development.

Birdsview's landowners recognize the importance of maintaining agricultural land and open space in the Skagit landscape. They share their grass with the wildlife, providing food for elk and other wildlife while reducing grazing impacts on other farms. "We want to produce high-quality hay, not just for farm animals, but because good grassland, protected forest, and water access combine to make functional wildlife habitat," explain the landowners.

From the Cascades to the Salish Sea, Skagit Land Trust is working with partners and landowners to protect Skagit's farmland and prime soils. Together, we are helping to safeguard places where agriculture, fish, and wildlife coexist and thrive.

Elk (bottom left) and sheep (bottom right) enjoy the rich grazing at the Elysium/Birdsview Conservation Easements.



Lands We Love Social June 7th 2025 2:00pm-5:30pm

Please join us for our annual fundraiser on the land at the beautiful Elysium/Birdsview Conservation Easement. This special private property has curving shoreline along the Skagit River and breathtaking views of the Cascade foothills, with chances to view wildlife.

At this festive gathering guests can catch up with friends, connect with board members, and talk with staff while enjoying delectable bites, wines, and beers.

The event will feature live music from One Eyed Cat, auction items, special excursion sign-ups, games, and a **raise-the-paddle fundraiser in support of local land conservation and stewardship**. Guests are encouraged to dress comfortably for this outdoor social.



All proceeds help conserve and care for Skagit's natural lands today and in the future. Tickets are on sale now at skagitlandtrust.org or call 360-428-7878.

Want to help make this event a success? Do you have...

- A cabin, condo, or boatripe, that could be offered as an experience?
- A connection with a business that might donate a trip or tour?
- A special skill you'd like to share through an experiential excursion or workshop?

Please email Development & Outreach Director, Laura Hartner, at laurah@skagitlandtrust.org if you are interested in hosting or donating an experience. Your generosity helps us continue protecting the lands we love. Thank you!

Thank You to Our Sponsors!

Sponsors of the Lands We Love Social allow us to put every dollar raised at the social into conserving and stewarding the lands and waters of the Skagit. We are grateful for their continued support of our event. Interested in sponsoring? Contact Development & Outreach Director, Laura Hartner, at laurah@skagitlandtrust.org

**The Hugh and Jane
Ferguson Foundation**



**Samish
Indian Nation**



Your gift during GiveBIG will go TWICE as far to conserve a

On May 6th & 7th, you can make a big impact on conservation effort. For every acre is conserved, the next miles of shoreline is protected, the next child is inspired to care for the world around them.

The pressures on our natural lands are growing. The Magic Skagit solutions to knit our natural lands back together.

When you join us for GiveBIG, your donation will be doubled, making it go twice as far. Visit skagitlandtrust.org to learn more and spread the word!

Skagit Land Trust Hosts 33rd Annual Meeting

Many thanks to the 150 supporters who joined Skagit Land Trust on March 13th for our 33rd Annual Membership Meeting. Attendees enjoyed a presentation from guest speaker Sam Barr, Director of the Coast Salish Youth Coalition (CSYC), who works to empower Indigenous youth through cultural collaboration and stewardship of ancestral lands. Co-presenters Birch Beaudet and David Wertheimer of Dog Woods discussed their partnership and vision for this special 120-acre forest on Guemes Island.

During the meeting, the Trust welcomed new Board members Meagan Maillet, Denby Lloyd, and Chris Varela. We also awarded the following honors to volunteers and partners who have contributed significantly to the mission and community of Skagit Land Trust:

SLT Board President's Blue Heron Award: Brian Adams, Director of Skagit County Parks & Recreation

Conservation Award: Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Stewardship Award: Land stewards Ron Lindsay and Theresa Connolly

Development & Outreach Award: Swan event volunteers Tim Manns, John Day, and Paul Anderson

Golden Hammer Award: SLT Facilities Committee Hal Lee, Paul Ingalls, Phil McCloud, and Keith Wiggers

To read more about the Annual Meeting or watch the recording, please go to our website's news page.



Sam Barr, Birch Beaudet, & David Wertheimer talk about their partnership at Dog Woods.



Left to right: Jane Zillig, Brian Adams, and Michael Kirshenbaum



Left to right: Carolyn Gestellum, Marie & John Erbstoesser, Steven & Robyn Johnson



Left to right: Kari Odden, Kim Ray, and Therese Ogle

are for the lands, waters, and wildlife of this special place

ports in the Skagit. During GiveBIG you can ensure that next
next heron has an undisturbed place to raise their chicks,

is worth protecting. You can help Skagit Land Trust find

ng a BIG difference in the natural world around you. Visit



Gaining Ground in the Fight Against Reed Canary Grass

When settlers first began farming in the Pacific Northwest, reed canary grass was introduced as a potential food source for their livestock. The problem? It grew and spread faster than the cows could eat it. Left unchecked, this aggressive invader spreads rapidly, choking out native species and resisting removal efforts. It survives mowing, spreads underground, and even endures underwater for weeks.

Skagit Land Trust's Minkler Lake Conservation Area, located east of Sedro-Woolley, is a battleground in the fight against reed canary grass. Over many years and with the help of members, volunteers and state and federal grants, the Trust purchased 138 acres here. For 20 years we have worked to restore the site's wetlands, forests, and open spaces, which are home to numerous waterfowl, coho salmon, cutthroat trout, elk, and native plants like willow and cottonwood.

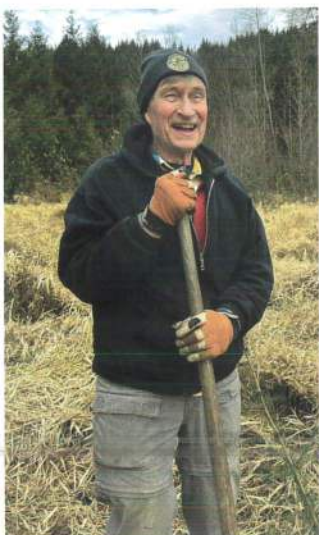
In 2024, we launched a major restoration effort against reed canary grass, with funding assistance from Skagit County's Voluntary Stewardship Program.

"Reed Canary grass does not do well in shade so we planted over 2,000 hardy trees to shade out the grass," says SLT's Stewardship Coordinator Jonathan Worley. "Our hope is that native species will control the reed canary grass and also boost Minkler Lake on its ecological journey."

Volunteers, alongside Washington Conservation Corps and EarthCorps, joined forces for the project. Trust staff and volunteers will continue maintenance over the next few years to help ensure the survival of the newly planted trees. We're excited to wait, watch, and witness nature taking its course in restoring the wetlands at Minkler Lake.



Summer or winter, canary grass dominates this part of the Minkler Lake Conservation Area.



Volunteers Pete Haase (left), Matthew Rikken (center left), & Emma Koelbl (center right), planting the next generation of native trees at Minkler Lake. SLT Stewardship Coordinator Jonathan Worley (right) checking on the plantings this Spring.

Welcome to Our New Board and Staff Members!

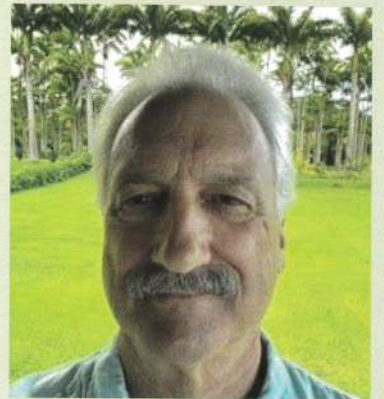
Chris Varela, *Board Member – Mt. Vernon*

Born and raised in Southern California, Chris now calls Skagit Valley home, where he works as a history teacher in Mount Vernon. He earned a BA in History from CSU San Bernardino and is currently pursuing a Master's in Social Studies at Ohio University. Passionate about both education and conservation, Chris has been volunteering with Skagit Land Trust since 2019 as a land steward and has served on the Development and Outreach Committee since 2021. When not in the classroom or working on conservation efforts, he enjoys spending time outdoors, exploring and appreciating nature.



Denby Lloyd, *Board Member – Anacortes*

Denby migrated to Alaska for college (biology) and graduate school (oceanography) and was fortunate to spend months at a time in remote field camps and aboard ship in many regions of the state. His career thereafter centered on fishery and natural resource management, ranging from field technician to land use permitter, research biologist to policy analyst, fishery manager to chief executive of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. After 44 years up North, Denby retired to the Big Island where he and his wife Laurie built a coffee, citrus and cacao farm. More recently they have moved to Anacortes to be closer to kids, grandkids, and other North American wildlife.



Meagan Maillet, *Board Member – Mt. Vernon*

Meagan Maillet holds a Juris Doctor from New England Law in Boston, Massachusetts, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Human Services with Minors in Environmental Studies & Communication from Western Washington University. After finishing law school, Meagan moved back to home to the Skagit where she was born and raised. She now works (remotely) as the Board of Review Staff Attorney for the Massachusetts Department of Labor & Workforce Development. Before moving to Boston, Meagan completed Skagit Conservation District's Watershed Master's Program and served as Skagit Land Trust's AmeriCorps volunteer in stewardship. The Trust is grateful to welcome Meagan back, now as a Board member!



Emily Schauble, *Stewardship Coordinator*

Emily holds degrees in Environmental Education (B.A.) and Environmental Science (B.S.) from Western Washington University. After graduation, she found herself nestled in the North Cascades working a variety of jobs, including some time as a park ranger for North Cascades National Park. Emily also sought experiences across the country, but after earning a Graduate Certificate in Environmental Education she was happy to return home to the Pacific Northwest. She is excited to build relationships with community members and partner organizations that support the mission of Skagit Land Trust. Emily lives upriver in Marblemount, and she loves recreating in the North Cascades. She also frequently visits family on the Olympic Peninsula. In her free time, Emily enjoys crafting, learning languages, and continually trying to perfect her gluten-free baking!



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mark Johnson, President
Mount Vernon

Warren Walz, Vice President
Anacortes

Sydney Wenberg-Davidson Treasurer
Anacortes

Jim Manns, Secretary
Mount Vernon

Harold Lee, Exec. Committee
Mount Vernon

Brad Furlong
Fur Island

Jim Glackin
Mount Vernon

Mark Hitchcock
Samish Island

Steven H. Johnson
Anacortes

Karen Krub
La Conner

Mark Linnemann
Guemes Island

Benby Lloyd
Anacortes

Jeagan Maillet
Mount Vernon

Therese Ogle
Samish Island/Anacortes

Cathy Thornburgh
Mount Vernon

Barbara Trask
Birdsview

Chris Varela
Mount Vernon

Keith Wiggers
Furlington

Anne Winkes
Conway

STAFF

Molly Doran
Executive Director

Michael Kirshenbaum
Conservation Director

Sandra Hartner
Development Director

Max Morange
Stewardship Director

Pat Strode-Elfant
Membership & Office Admin.

Jessica Lange
Conservation Project Manager

Kari Odden
Conservation Project Manager

Stacy Dahl
Volunteer & Education Prog Coord.

Sarah Gardam
Outreach Coordinator

Emily Schauble
Stewardship Coordinator

Jonathan Worley
Stewardship Coordinator

Oceanna Boulanger - AmeriCorps

Emma Koelbl - AmeriCorps

Leslie Menard - Accountant

Debbie Ensey - Event Coord.

Phil Buri, P.S. - General Counsel



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Mount Vernon, WA
Permit No. 195

Skagit Land Trust conserves wildlife habitat,
agricultural and forest lands, scenic open space
and shorelines for the benefit of our community
and as a legacy for future generations.

PO Box 1017 • 1020 S Third Street
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
www.skagitlandtrust.org • 360-428-7878

RECEIVED

MAY -2 2025

WA STATE
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE



*****3-DIGIT 985

Salmon Recovery Funding Board
PO Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

S: 1394
T: 9
B: 3

Upcoming Events

SKAGIT LAND TRUST SPEAKER SERIES:

"Hiking Close to Home" with Jack Hartt (on Zoom)

Wednesday, May 14th @ 6pm - 7:30pm Register on our website, skagitlandtrust.org

Guemes Mountain Camas Hike with Jack Hartt

Sunday, May 18th @ 8:30am - 2pm (in-person)

WORK PARTIES:

Lyman Slough Invasive Plant Removal

Friday, May 2nd @ 10am - 2pm

Pressentin Ranch Invasive Plant Removal

Saturday, May 17th @ 10am - 2pm

Cascade River Invasive Plant Removal

Monday, June 2nd @ 10am - 2pm

SAVE THE DATES:

Lands We Love Social - JUNE 7th

Summer Solstice Bioblitz - JUNE 20th

Skagit Land Trust Annual Picnic - JULY 20th



The lands conserved and protected by Skagit Land Trust have been inhabited and stewarded by numerous tribes and Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. We recognize and respect the inherent, indigenous, and treaty rights of the Coast Salish People who have deep and abiding connections to these places. We seek to partner with local tribes as we conserve and care for these lands and waters.

Executive Committee

Ariel Edwards
Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board
Lead Entity

Aundrea McBride, Chair
Skagit Watershed Council

Denise Smee
Lower Columbia Lead Entity

Kirsten Harma
Chehalis Basin Lead Entity

Lisa Spurrier
Puyallup and Chambers Watersheds Salmon
Recovery Lead Entity

Mike Lithgow, Past Chair
Kalispei-Pend Oreille Lead Entity

Renee Johnson, Chair Elect
West Sound Partners for Ecosystem
Recovery

Members

Ali Fitzgerald
Snake River Salmon Recovery Board

Alicia Olivas
Hood Canal Lead Entity

Amy Hatch-Winecka
Deschutes WRIA 13 Salmon Recovery Lead
Entity

Anna Geffre
North Pacific Coast Lead Entity

Ashley Von Essen
Nisqually Lead Entity

Becky Peterson
WRIA 1 Watershed Management Board

Caleb McGivney
Spokane Lead Entity

Cheryl Baumann
N. Olympic Lead Entity for Salmon

Cheyne Mayer
Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board
Lead Entity

Dani Driscoll
Stillaguamish Watershed Lead Entity

Gretchen Glaub
Snohomish Lead Entity

Carrie Byron
Lake Washington, Cedar, Sammamish
Watershed (WRIA 8) Lead Entity

Jason Murray
WRIA 14 Lead Entity

Jessica Reed
Island County Lead Entity WRIA 6

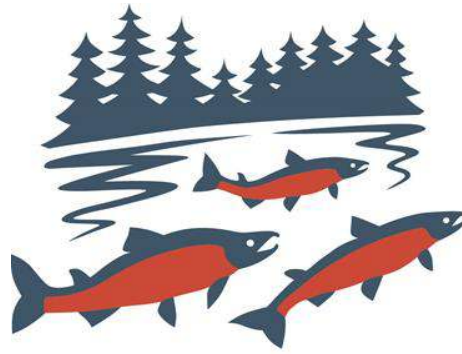
Keaton Curtice
Klickitat County Lead Entity

Richard Brocksmith
Quinault Indian Nation Lead Entity

Sam Whitridge
San Juan Lead Entity

Suzanna Smith
WRIA 9 Green/Duwamish and Central Puget
Sound Watershed

Tom Kollasch
Pacific County Lead Entity



WASHINGTON
SALMON
COALITION
Community-Based Salmon Recovery

June 4, 2025

Dear Chair Breckel, Salmon Recovery Funding Board members and Director Duffy,

On behalf of the Washington Salmon Coalition, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide this Partner Report. The Washington Salmon Coalition (WSC) seeks to communicate the interests of Lead Entities and their communities statewide, provide a forum for discussing emerging Lead Entity issues, develop strategies for addressing these issues, and share best practices amongst colleagues to provide educational opportunities for the 26 Lead Entities in Washington State.

Since we last met, the Washington Salmon Coalition convened for our second All Hands Meeting of the year on March 25th. We received a training in peer-supported problem solving, got an RCO policy update and engaged in some riparian funding brainstorming with Nick Norton, and learned from Kat Moore about acquisition projects. We continue to appreciate RCO staff's willingness to provide training and seek feedback on emerging issues.

In our LE Happenings report attached, we have news of the budding riparian program in the Stillaguamish Watershed and a floodplain reconnection project in the Lower Columbia Region.

From our Subcommittees:

- **Communications & Outreach** is planning a series of legislator site visits in May to reinforce support for salmon recovery.
- **Training and Learning and Sharing** are organizing a "Burnout Prevention" training, and teeing up discussions on riparian funding updates, file-sharing best practices, and strategies to engage committee members more effectively.

Thank you for your continued work toward salmon recovery.

Kind Regards,

Aundrea McBride
Chair of the Washington Salmon Coalition